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FROM BEYOND THE GRAVE! THE SECRET DIARY OF THE GREEN GOBLIN!

the SPECTACULAR SPIDER-MAN

ENTER the
MIND of a
MADMAN...

...AND LEARN THE
MOST SHOCKING
SECRET OF ALL!

DIRECT EDITION

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BITTEN BY A RADIOACTIVE SPIDER, STUDENT PETER PARKER GAINED THE PROPORTIONATE STRENGTH AND AGILITY OF AN ARACHNID! ARMED WITH HIS WONDROUS WEB-SHOOTERS, THE RELUCTANT SUPER HERO STRUGGLES WITH SINISTER SUPER-VILLAINS, MAKING ENDS MEET, AND MAINTAINING SOME SEMBLANCE OF A NORMAL LIFE!

STAN LEE PRESENTS: **THE SPECTACULAR SPIDER-MAN**

CYCLES & CIRCLES

NOW WHAT THE HECK AM I DOING HERE?

WHAT ODD INSTINCT IS THIS, AND, MORE TO THE POINT-- SHOULD I LISTEN TO IT?

IT'S FUNNY, NOW I STICK TO THE SAME PATTERNS--HOW I SWING AROUND THE CITY, ALWAYS TRAVELING IN LOOPS, PASSING OVER HOT SPOTS, CHECKING OUT TROUBLESOME BLOCKS...

BUT SOMETIMES I FIND MYSELF MAKING WILD DETOURS TO PASS BY CERTAIN SPOTS AND I DON'T EVEN KNOW WHY...

LIKE HERE, NOW, AT THIS BUILDING...

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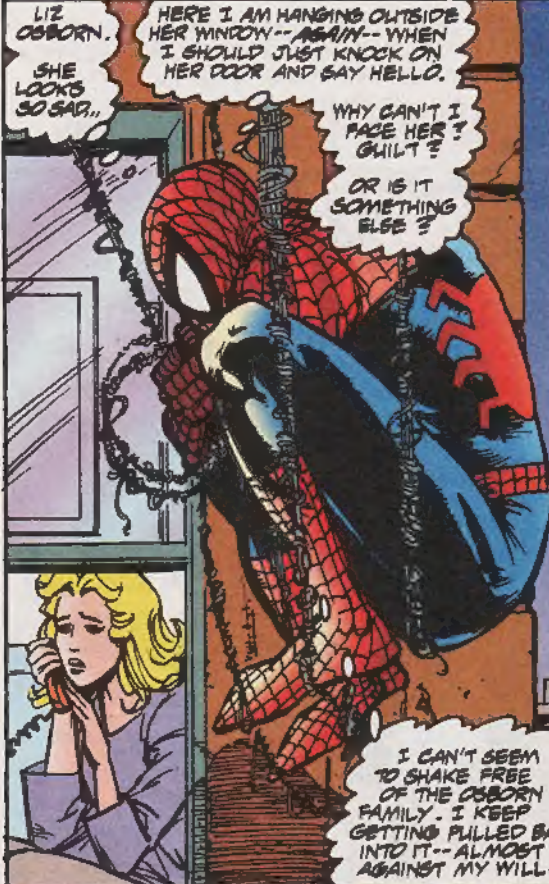
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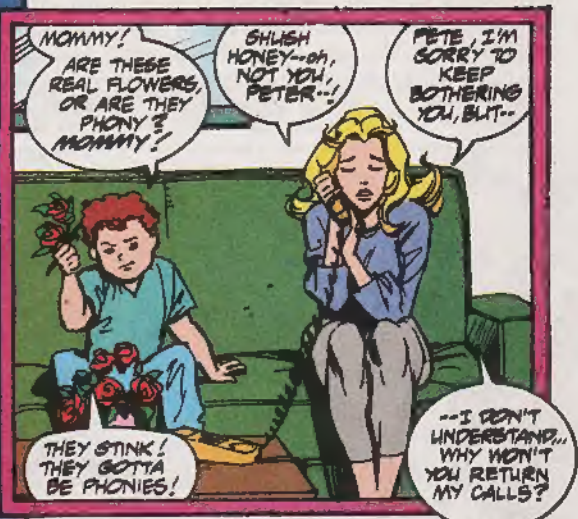


LIZ OSBORN.
SHE LOOKS SO SAD...

HERE I AM HANGING OUTSIDE HER WINDOW--~~AWAY~~ WHEN I SHOULD JUST KNOCK ON HER DOOR AND SAY HELLO.

WHY CAN'T I FACE HER? GUILT?
OR IS IT SOMETHING ELSE?

I CAN'T SEEM TO SHAKE FREE OF THE OSBORN FAMILY. I KEEP GETTING PULLED BACK INTO IT--ALMOST AGAINST MY WILL--



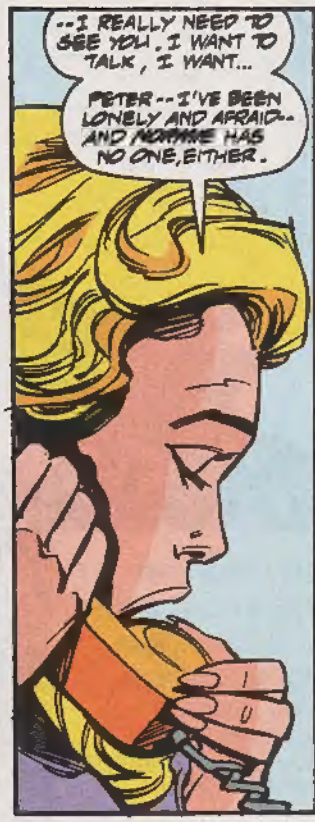
MOMMY! ARE THESE REAL FLOWERS, OR ARE THEY PHONY? MOMMY!

SHUSH HONEY--OH, NOT YOU PETER--!

PETE, I'M SORRY TO KEEP BOTHERING YOU, BUT--

THEY STINK! THEY GOTTA BE PHONIES!

--I DON'T UNDERSTAND... WHY WON'T YOU RETURN MY CALLS?



--I REALLY NEED TO SEE YOU. I WANT TO TALK, I WANT...

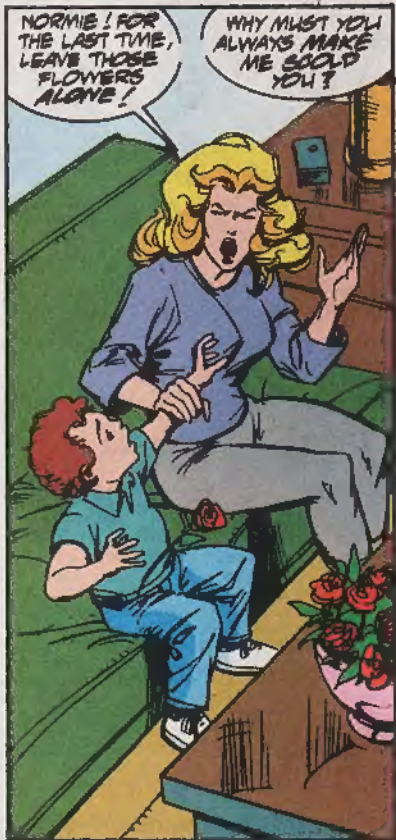
PETER--I'VE BEEN LONELY AND AFRAID--AND NORMIE HAS NO ONE, EITHER.



I GUESS YOU WERE FRIENDS WITH JUST MY HUSBAND--AND I'M ONLY THE WIDOW.

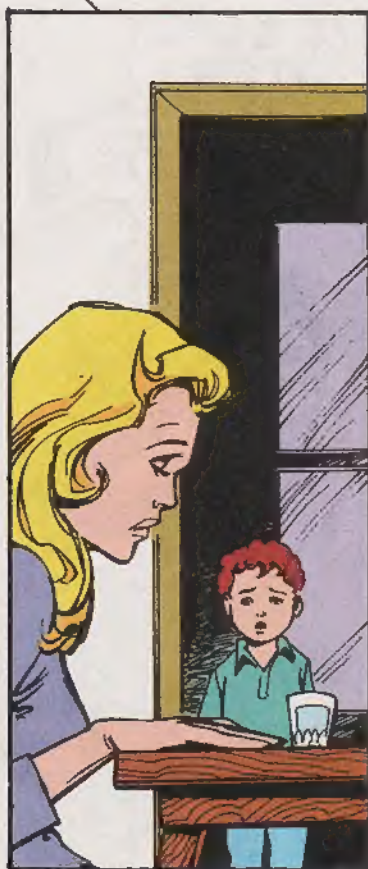
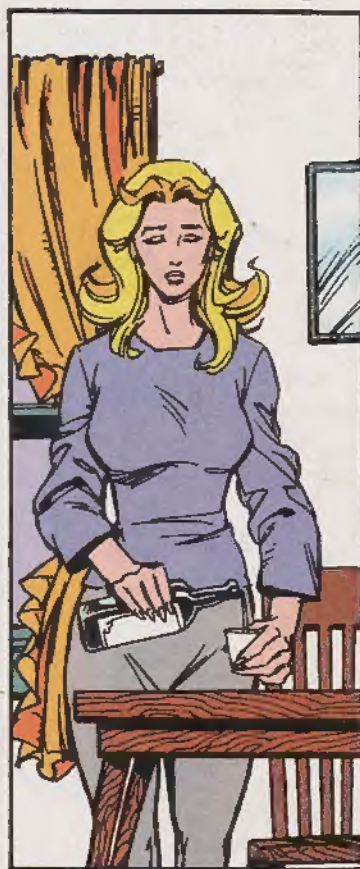
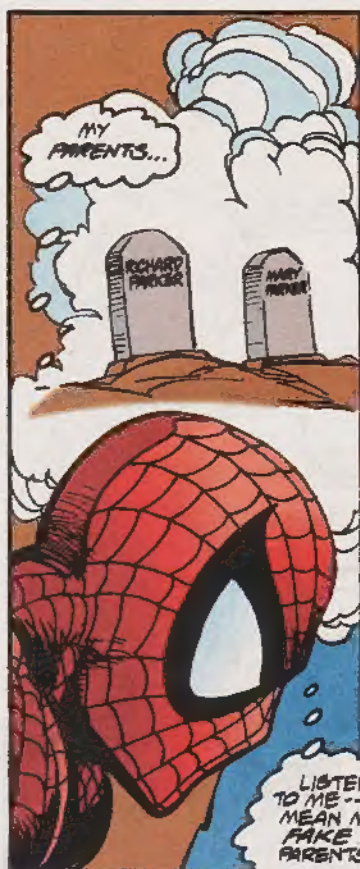
LIZ, IF YOU ONLY KNEW--HOW I'VE TRIED--
OH, WHAT'S THE USE?

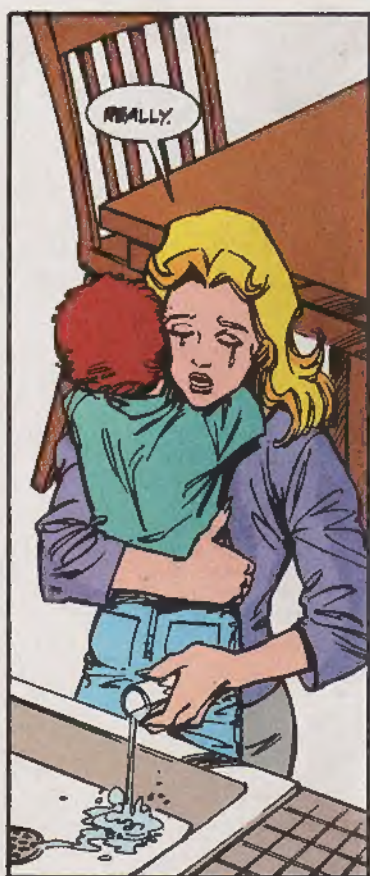
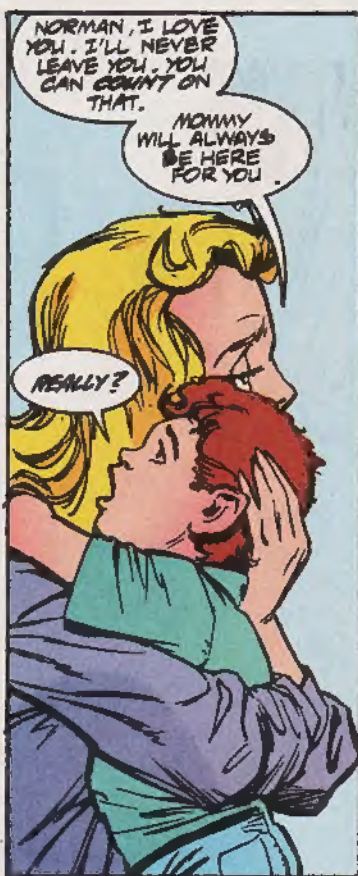
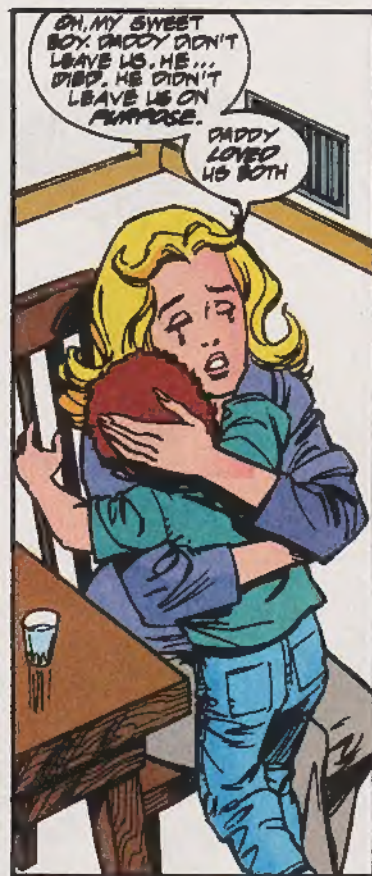
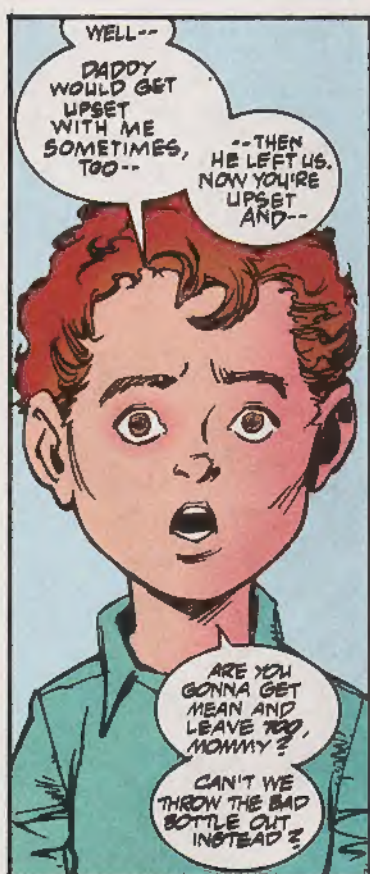
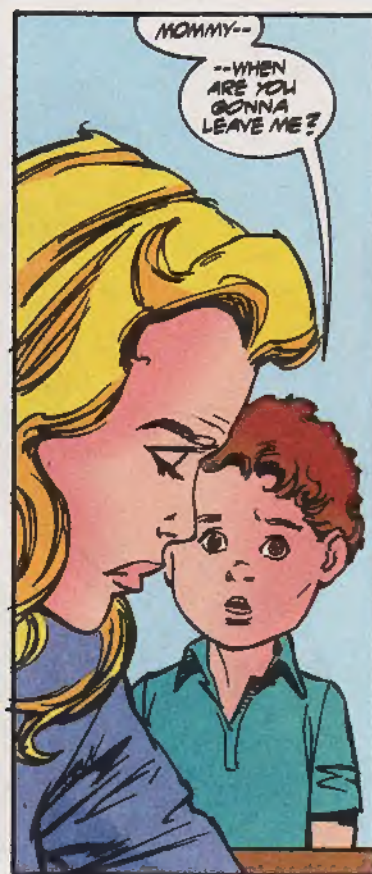
MOMMY! ARE THESE STINKY FLOWERS REAL OR--

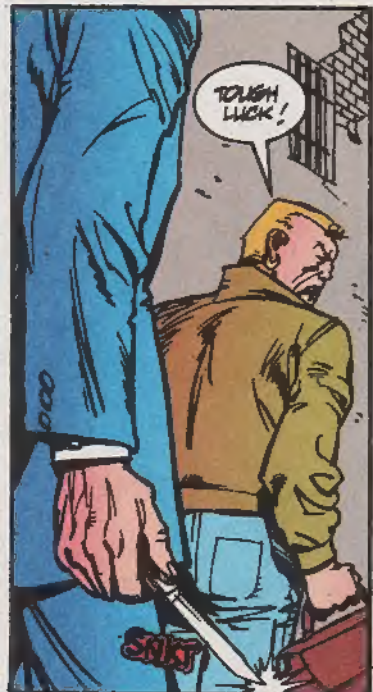
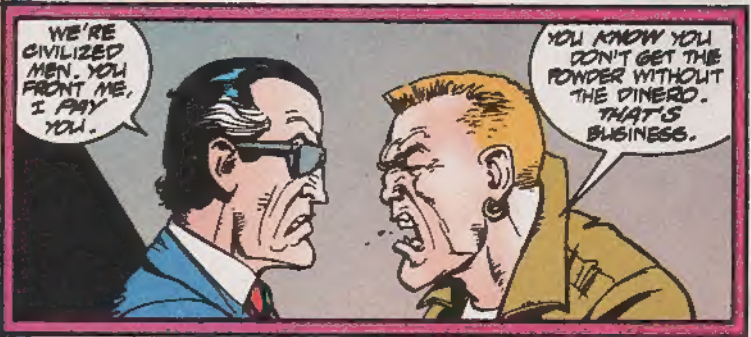


NORMIE! FOR THE LAST TIME, LEAVE THOSE FLOWERS ALONE!

WHY MUST YOU ALWAYS MAKE ME SOOD YOU?









DROP 'EM,
BOYS!
RECESS
IS OVER.



SAYS WHO?
THIS IS
OUR TURN!



THERE'S
ALWAYS A
SMART
GUY, ISN'T
THERE?



IT'S BACK
TO NIGHT
SCHOOL
FOR
YOU, LAME
BRAIN.

KRAK



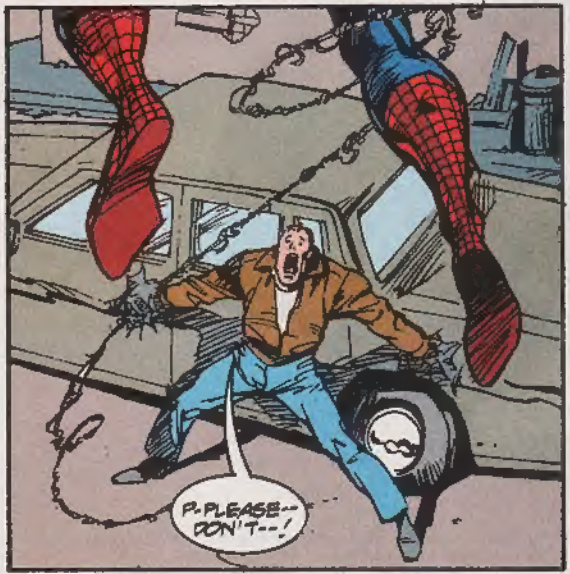
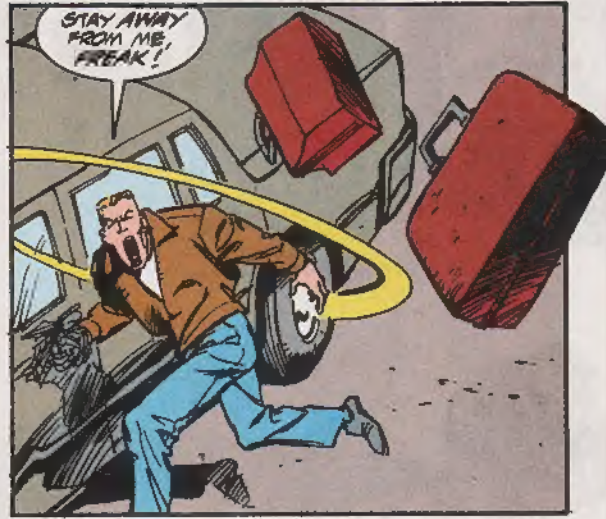
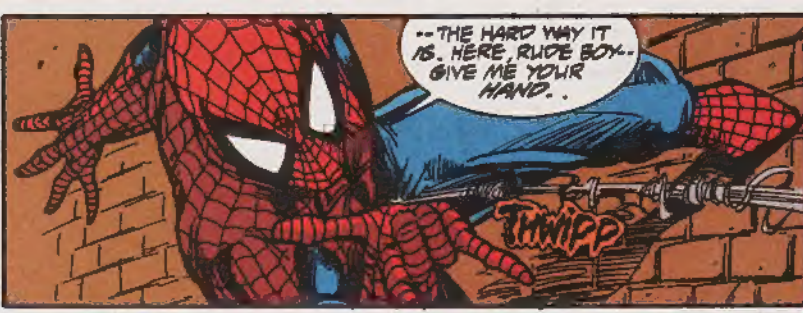
YOU TOO,
PROFESSOR.

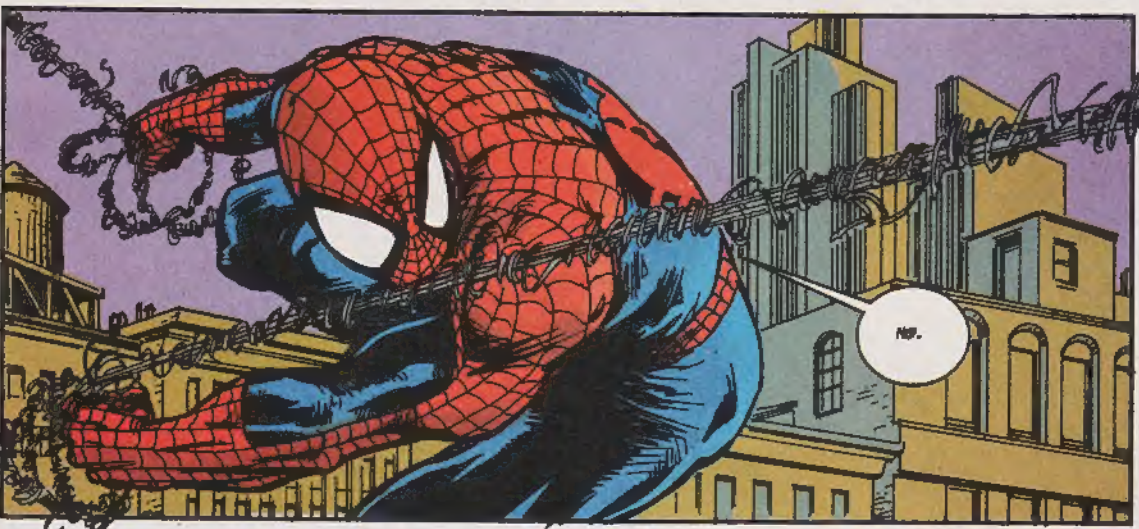
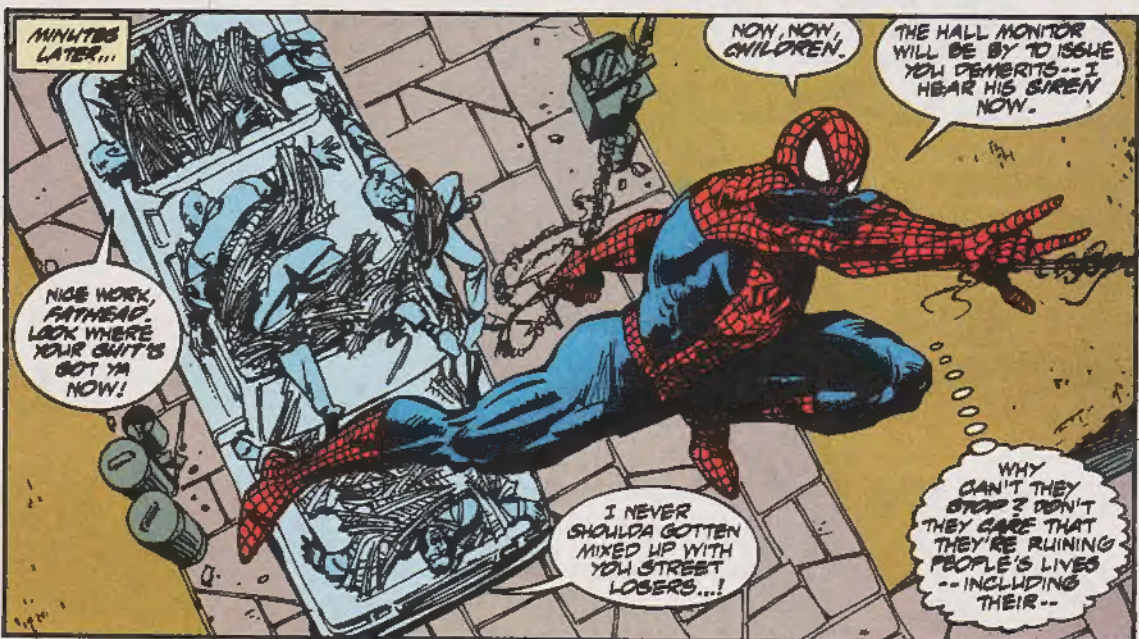
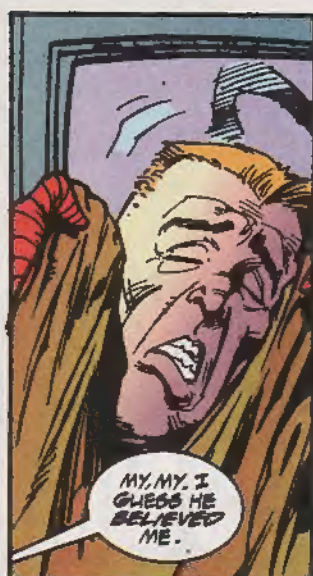
THOW



WE CAN DO
THIS THE EASY
WAY OR THE
HARD WAY...

OKAY...





I HATE
COINCIDENCES.

SEEMS LIKE I
CAN'T ESCAPE
THE OSBORN CLAN
TONIGHT.

EVEN THOUGH
IT COULD NEVER
TOP THE FUN OF
PROVING MY THEORY
THAT DRUG DOPES
MAKE THE SAME
MISTAKES OVER
AND OVER--

--I MIGHT
AS WELL
HAVE A
LOOK-SEE.

WHAT A
MESS.
TOTAL
SHAMBLES.
LIKE
LOTS OF
THINGS.

OSBORN
INDUST

CONDEMNED

IT'S GONE TO
ROT SINCE
HARRY DIED.

LIKE
LOTS OF
THINGS.

YUP. A YEAR OF DUST
AND COBWEBS. I'M
THE FIRST ONE TO
MAKE TRACKS
HERE IN A LONG
WHILE.

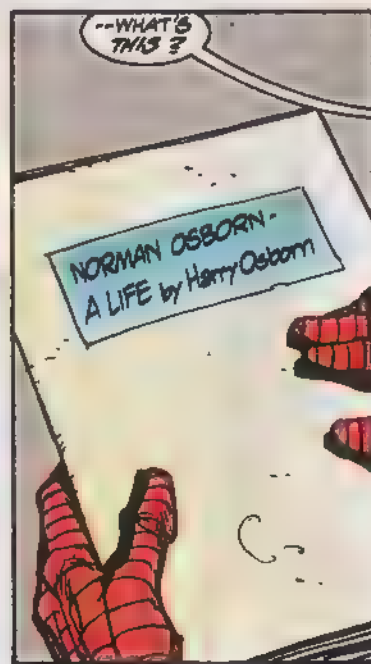
WOW--
DEJA VU--
--I FEEL
LIKE I'VE
BEEN HERE
BEFORE!

OKAY,
NOW I OPEN
THIS DOOR,
RIGHT?

PRESS
THE
"HIDDEN"
BUTTON"

VERY
GOOD.
THE OLD
FAKE-CLOSET-
SECRET-
PANEL
SCHTICK.

AN
OSBORN
FAMILY
FAVORITE.



A CD-ROM
FILE.

HOPE
THIS
BOOTS
UP--
YUP. POWER'S
PROBABLY BEEN
FILTERED FROM
THE MAIN LINES,
BYPASSING ANY
METERS.

THOSE PIRATING OSBORN,
ONTHANS-- NEVER WANT TO PAY
ANY BILLS! NEVER WANT TO
FACE THE MUSIC! NEVER--

HARRY.

THIS IS A
DIGITAL
RECORD OF
THE OSBORN
FAMILY TREE.

I--I DON'T KNOW
WHO--IF ANYONE--
WILL EVER SEE
THIS, BUT--

THE MEMORIES THAT
WILL FOLLOW MAY NOT
BE... TOTALLY ACCURATE--
BUT THEY ARE TRUE!

--BUT IT'S
IMPORTANT IT
BE SET DOWN
HERE FOR ALL
TIME.

AS TRUE AS MEMORY
CAN BE...

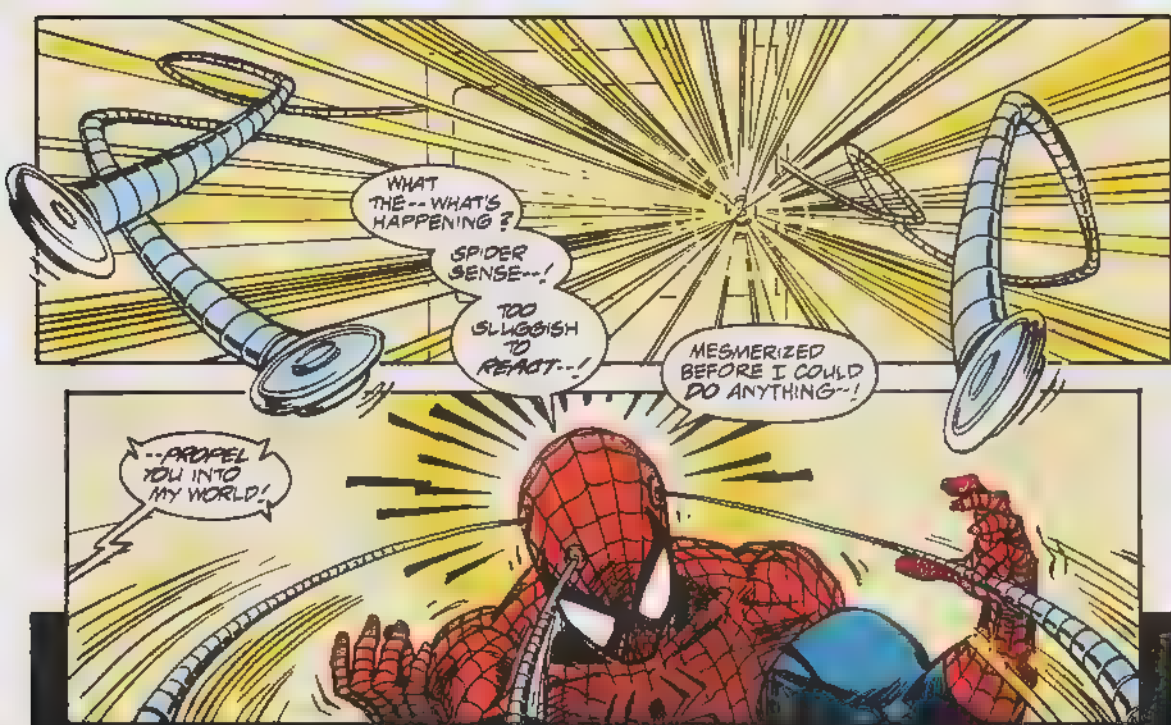
I--I FEEL
WEAK,
DIZZY--
WHY?

I DO NOT
WANT YOU,
MY LISTENER--

--I DON'T WANT
YOU TO JUST
SIMPLY HEAR
WHAT I HAVE
TO SAY.

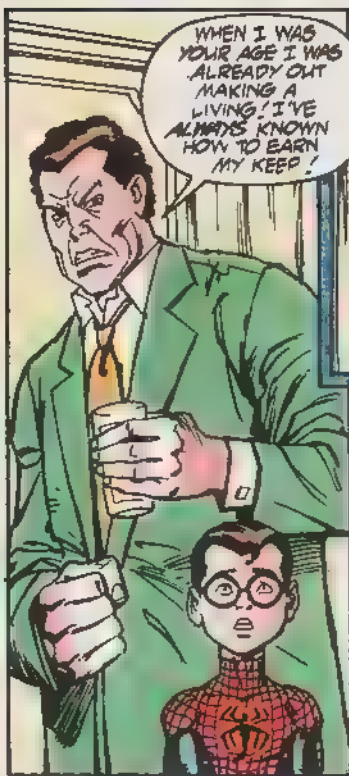
AND THANKS TO
MY FATHER'S
CYBER-
INNOVATIONS--

--I HAVE TAKEN
THE OPPORTUNITY
TO ENCODE AN
ALTERNATING
AUDIO TRACK ON
THIS DISC WITH A
SUBLIMINAL LOOP
THAT, AFTER ONE
MINUTE OF EYE
CONTACT WILL LITER-
ALLY PROPEL YOU--

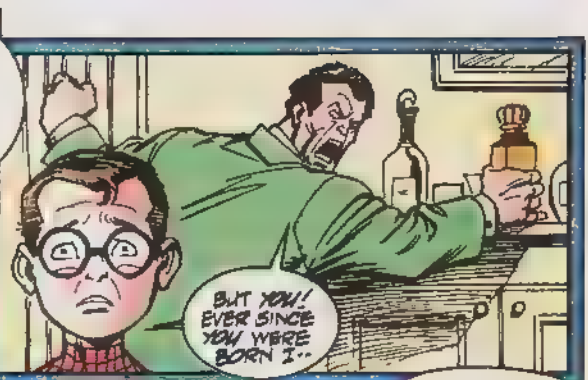




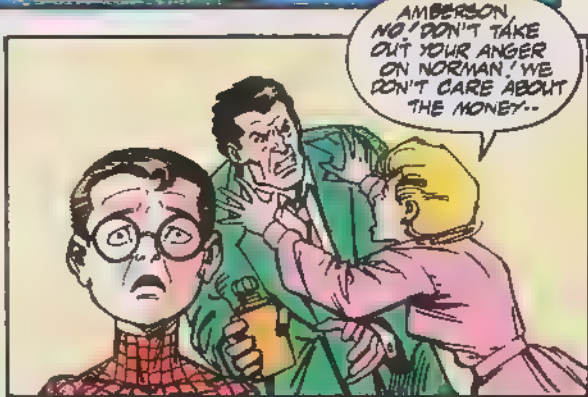
NORMAN!
LOOK AT ME
WHEN I
SPEAK TO
YOU, BOY!



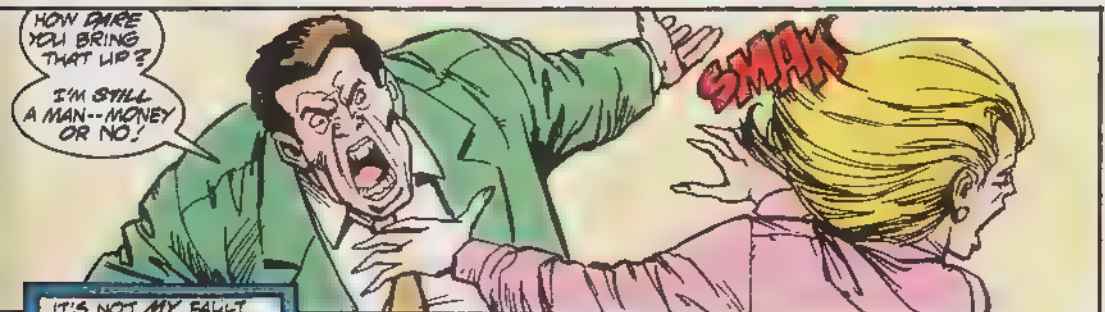
WHEN I WAS
YOUR AGE I WAS
ALREADY OUT
MAKING A
LIVING! I'VE
ALWAYS KNOWN
HOW TO EARN
MY KEEP!



BUT YOU!
EVER SINCE
YOU WERE
BORN I...



AMBERSON
NO! DON'T TAKE
OUT YOUR ANGER
ON NORMAN! WE
DON'T CARE ABOUT
THE MONEY...



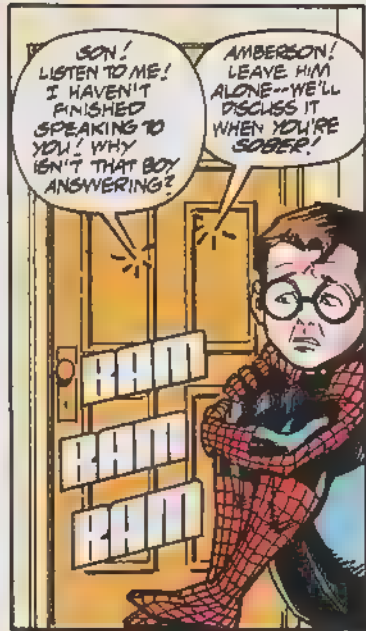
HOW DARE
YOU BRING
THAT UP?

I'M STILL
A MAN--MONEY
OR NO!

SMACK

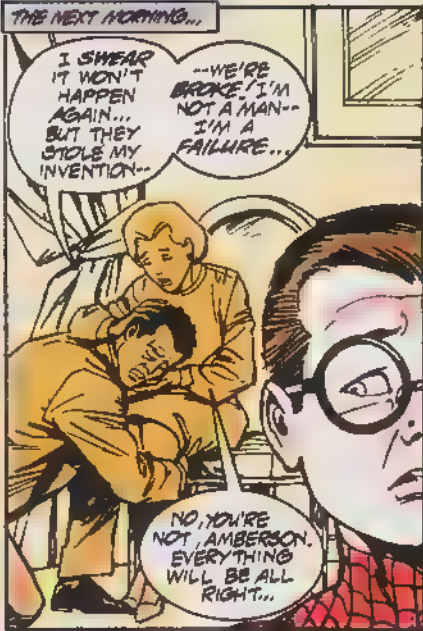


IT'S NOT MY FAULT
THE BUSINESS FAILED!
I WAS ROBBED--
CHEATED!



SON!
LISTEN TO ME!
I HAVEN'T
FINISHED
SPEAKING TO
YOU! WHY
ISN'T THAT BOY
ANSWERING?

AMBERSON!
LEAVE HIM
ALONE--WE'LL
DISCUSS IT
WHEN YOU'RE
SOBER!



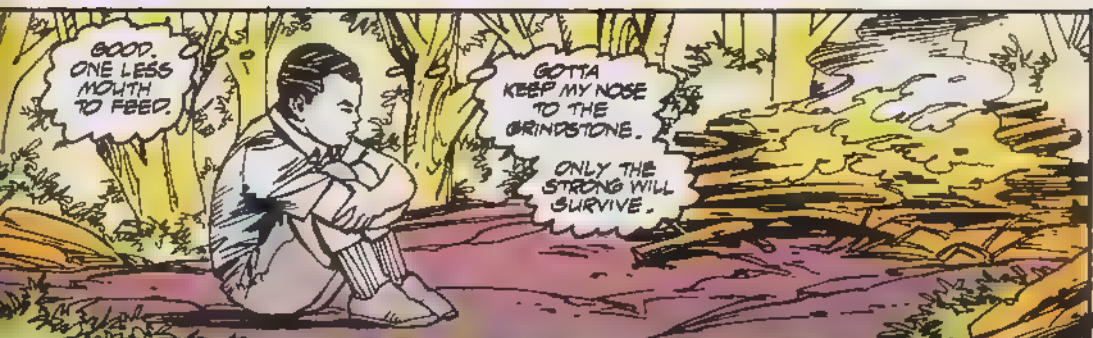
THE NEXT MORNING...

I SWEAR
IT WON'T
HAPPEN
AGAIN...
BUT THEY
STOLE MY
INVENTION...

--WE'RE
BROKE! I'M
NOT A MAN--
I'M A
FAILURE...

NO, YOU'RE
NOT AMBERSON.
EVERYTHING
WILL BE ALL
RIGHT...





GOOD.
ONE LESS
MOUTH
TO FEED.

GOTTA
KEEP MY NOSE
TO THE
GRINDSTONE.

ONLY THE
STRONG WILL
SURVIVE.



THE CYCLE
OF ABUSE!
DOES IT EVER
END?

IT JUST
FEEDS ON
ITSELF, DEVOURS
EVERYTHING
IN ITS PATH.

EVEN I--
I FEEL SO--
SO ANGRY!

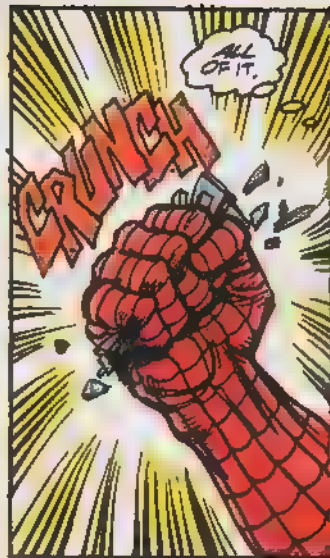
THE PAIN,
IT MAKES YOU
DO CRAZY
THINGS...!



SOMETHING'S GOT TO GIVE--IT'S TOO MUCH FOR ANYONE TO BEAR!



FOR STARTERS THIS MIND-JAMMING STINK HAS GOT TO GO!



ALL OF IT.



THAT KID--THAT WAS YOUNG NORMAN...HARRY'S DAD...EVEN HE SUFFERED...

BUT, NO! WE ALL HAVE OUR PROBLEMS AND TRIALS. EVERYONE HAS TO FIND A WAY--

--I REFUSE TO FEEL PITY FOR HIM...



IF I COULD ONLY FOCUS ON THE GOOD STUFF...



--AND REMEMBER THE FRIENDSHIP MAYBE I COULD HAVE PREVENTED...



NO! MY PARENTS DIED--TWICE!

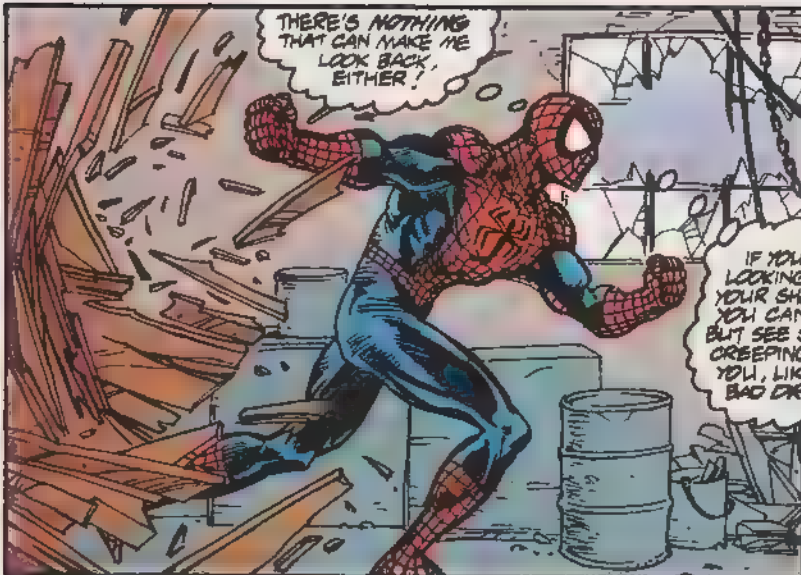
BUT I NEVER TURNED TO CRIME, HARRY! I NEVER TRIED TO RUIN SOMEBODY ELSE'S LIFE!



I'M TIRED OF YOU GETTING IN MY WAY ALL MY LIFE! YOU'RE GONE--

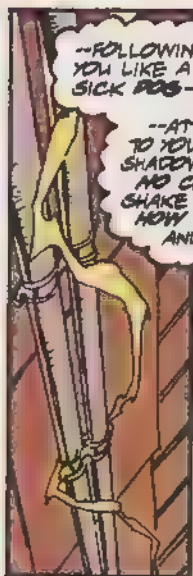
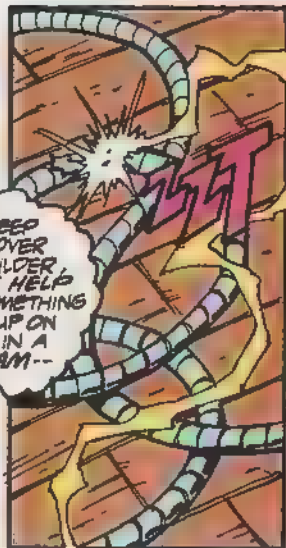
--AND I DON'T EVER WANT TO SEE LIZ AND NORMIE AGAIN, EITHER!

I'M OUTTA HERE!



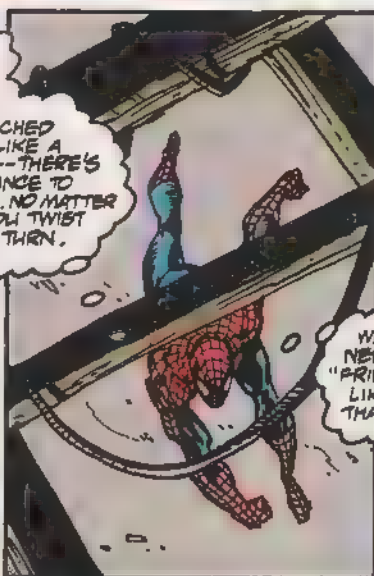
THERE'S NOTHING THAT CAN MAKE ME LOOK BACK, EITHER!

IF YOU KEEP LOOKING OVER YOUR SHOULDER, YOU CAN'T HELP BUT SEE SOMETHING CREEPING UP ON YOU, LIKE IN A BAD DREAM--

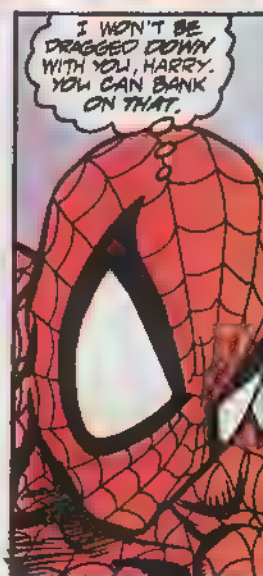


--FOLLOWING YOU LIKE A SICK DOG--

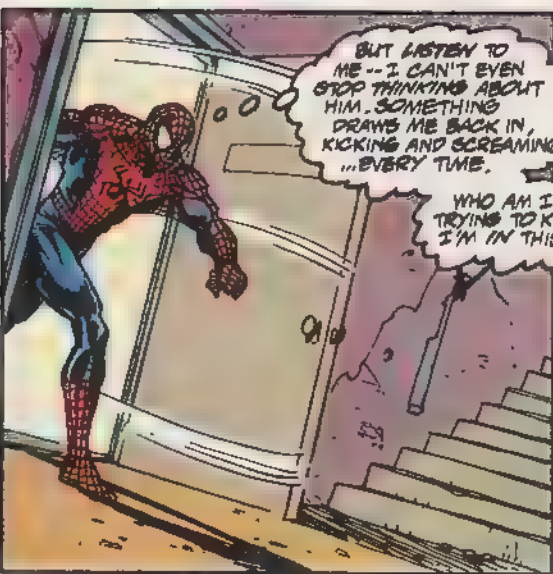
--ATTACHED TO YOU LIKE A SHADOW--THERE'S NO CHANCE TO SHAKE IT. NO MATTER HOW YOU TWIST AND TURN.



WHO NEEDS "FRIENDS" LIKE THAT?

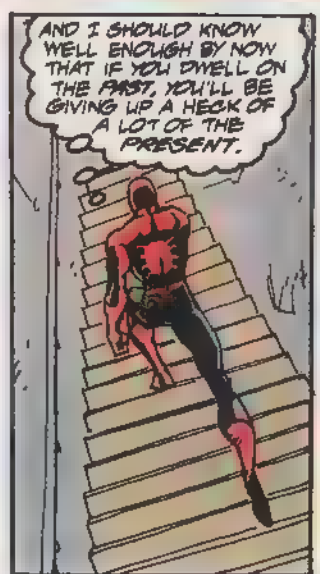
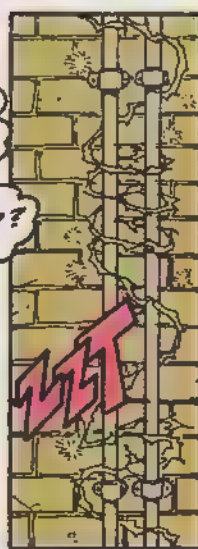


I WON'T BE DRAGGED DOWN WITH YOU, HARRY. YOU CAN BANK ON THAT.

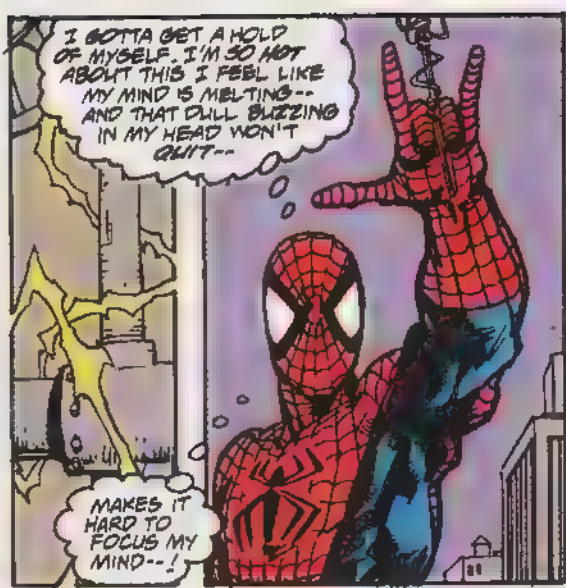


BUT LISTEN TO ME--I CAN'T EVEN STOP THINKING ABOUT HIM...SOMETHING DRAWS ME BACK IN, KICKING AND SCREAMING "EVERY TIME.

WHO AM I TRYING TO KID? I'M IN THIS.



AND I SHOULD KNOW WELL ENOUGH BY NOW THAT IF YOU DWELL ON THE PAST, YOU'LL BE GIVING UP A HECK OF A LOT OF THE PRESENT.



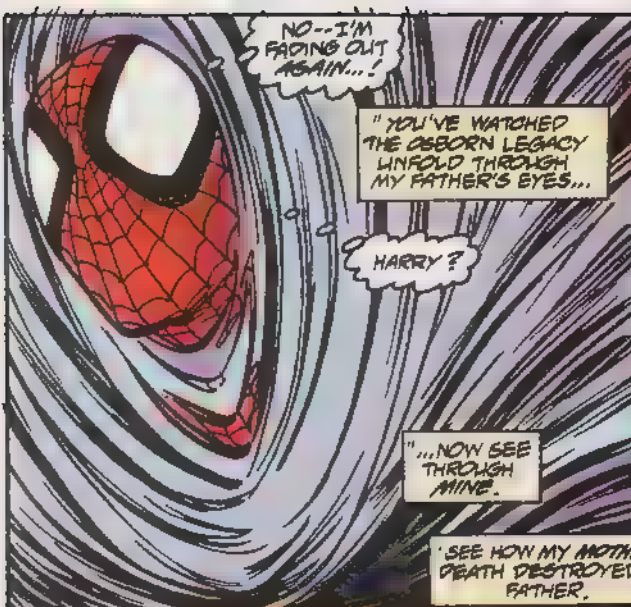


HEAD
STILL FUZZY
FROM THAT
COMPUTER
THING--

BOOM

BA

COULDN'T
REACT
IN TIME...



NO--I'M FADING OUT AGAIN...

"YOU'VE WATCHED THE OSBORN LEGACY UNFOLD THROUGH MY FATHER'S EYES..."

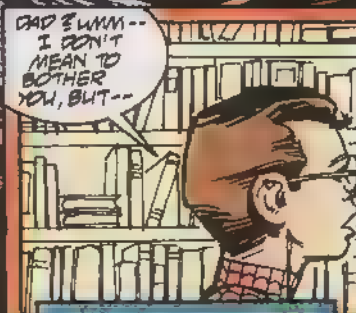
HARRY?

"...NOW SEE THROUGH MINE..."

"SEE HOW MY MOTHER'S DEATH DESTROYED MY FATHER."



WHY, MOTHER? WHEN WILL I SEE YOU AGAIN?



DAD? UMM-- I DON'T MEAN TO BOTHER YOU, BUT--

--BUT I NEED SOME HELP WITH...

"HE IMMERSSED HIMSELF IN HIS WORK, LEAVING HIM NO TIME FOR ANYTHING ELSE."

EXCUSE ME, DAD? DAD?



WHAT? WHO'S THERE?
OH, IT'S YOU.
CAN'T YOU SEE I'M BUSY?

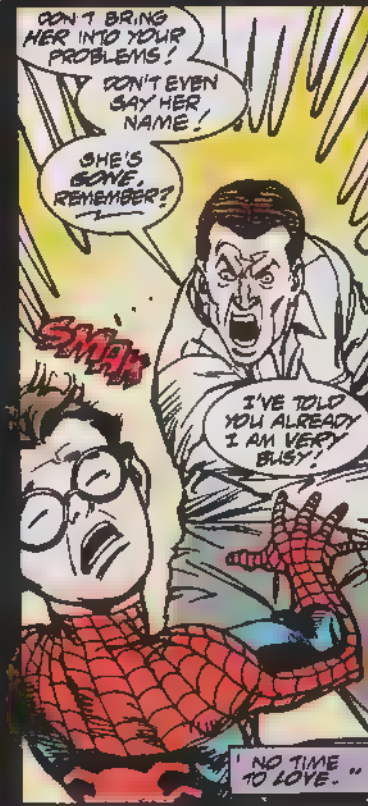
"NO TIME TO SHARE."



NO TIME TO FEEL...

DAD? I'M HUNGRY...

I WONDERED WHERE DOES MOM KEEP THE--



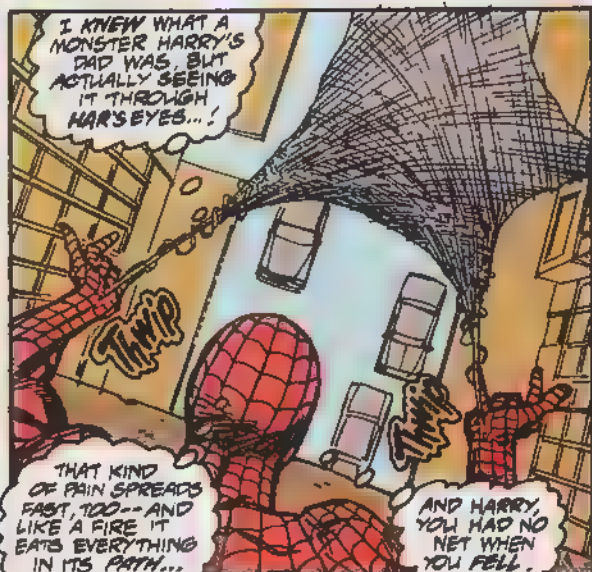
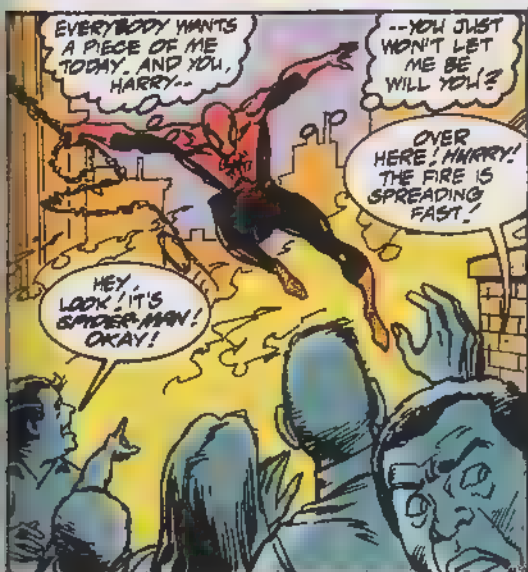
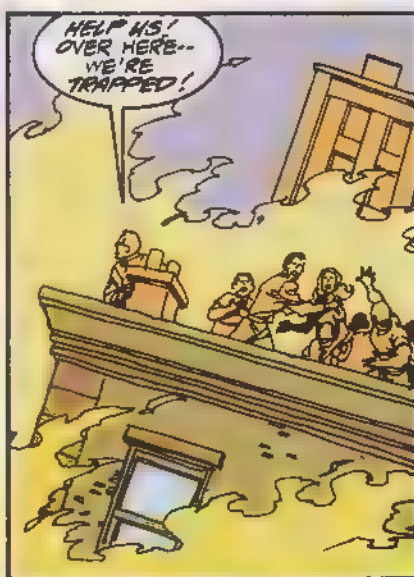
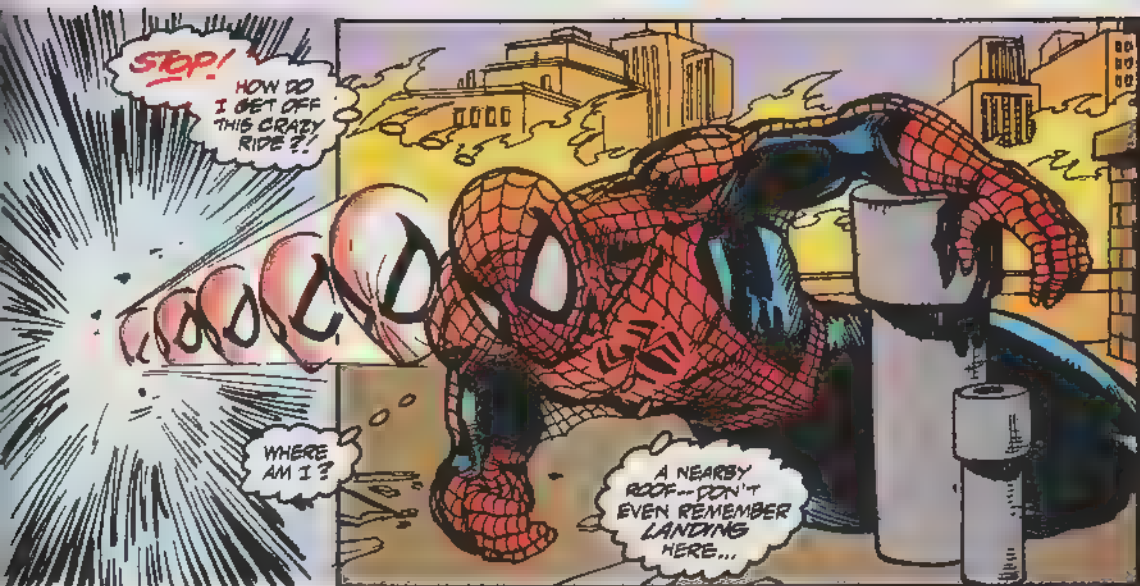
DON'T BRING HER INTO YOUR PROBLEMS!

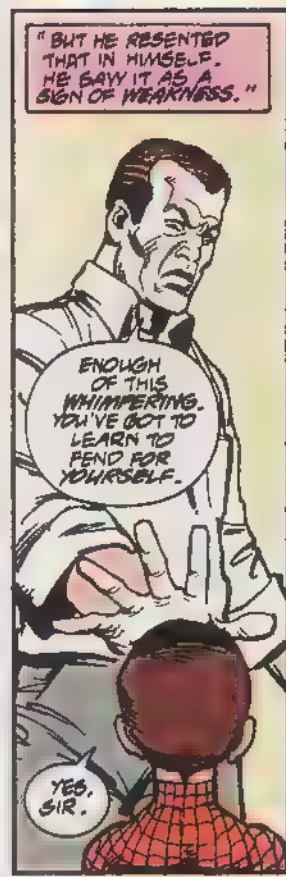
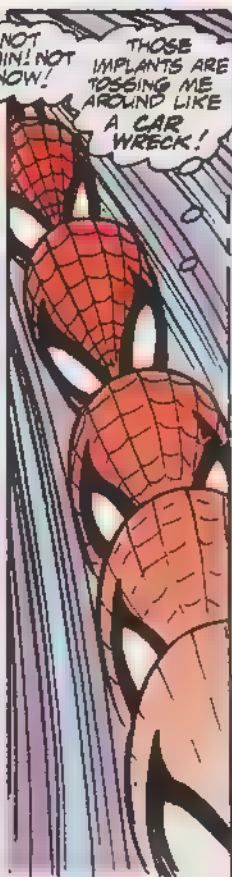
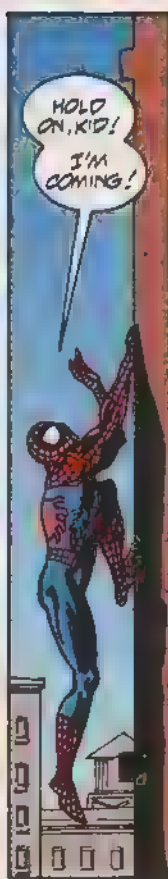
DON'T EVEN SAY HER NAME!

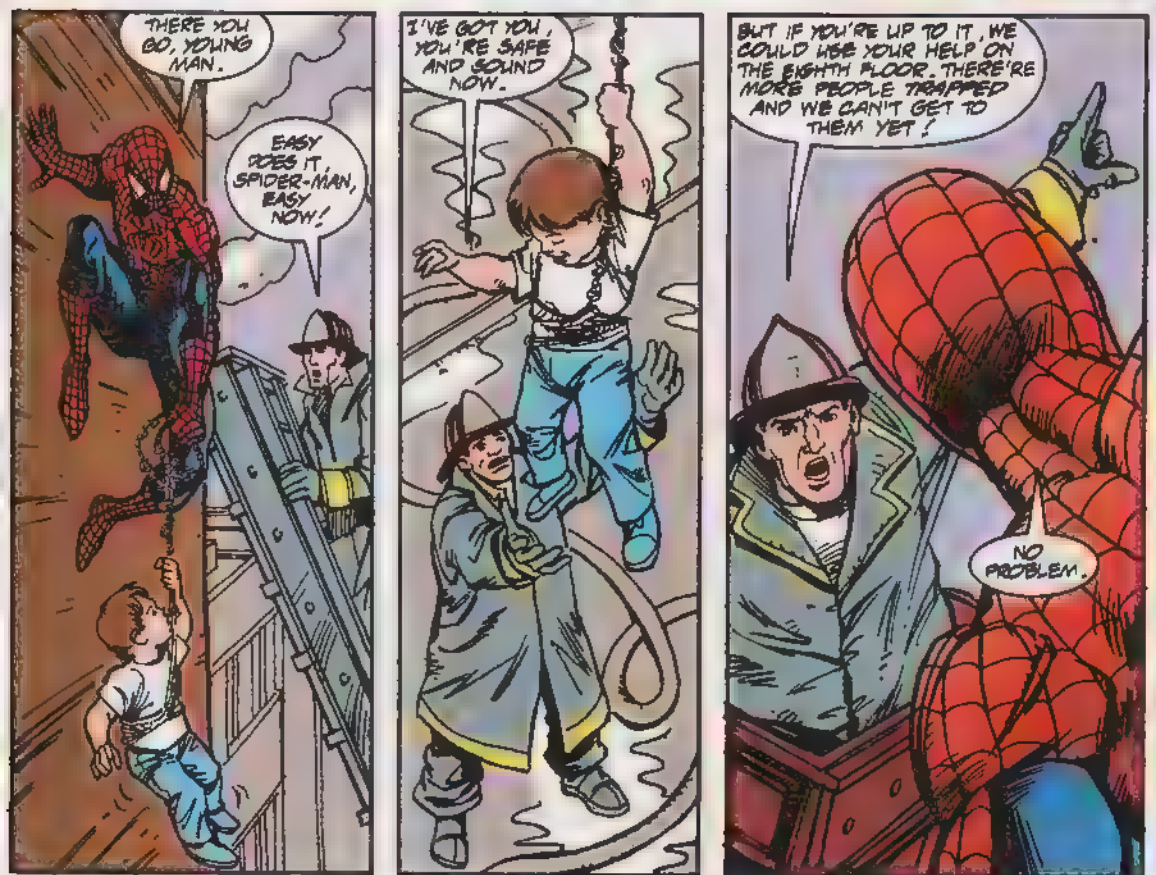
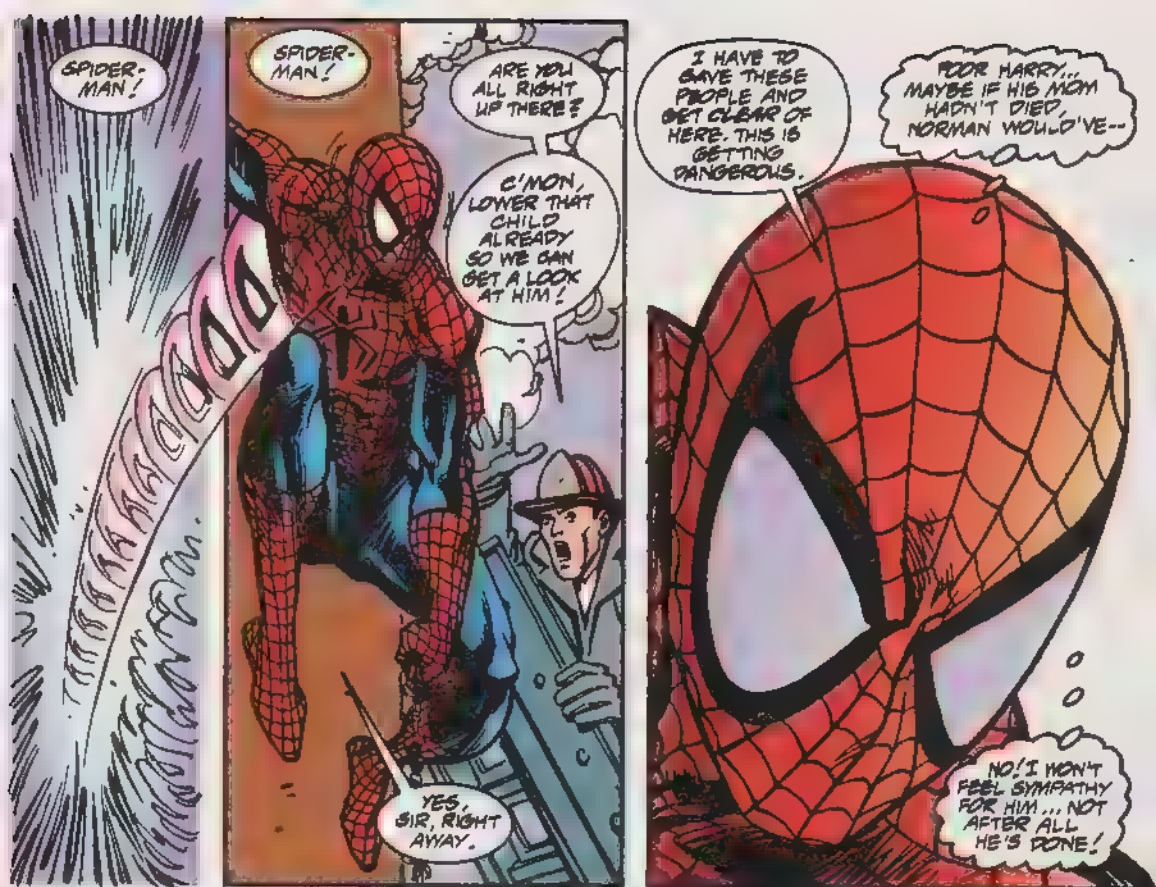
SHE'S GONE, REMEMBER?

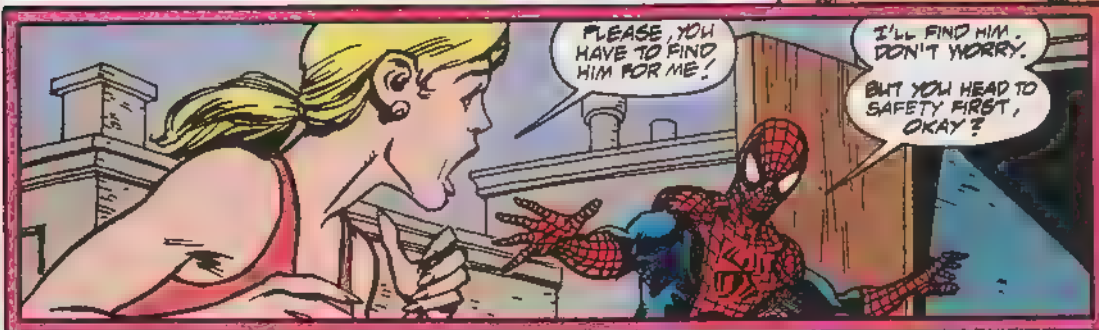
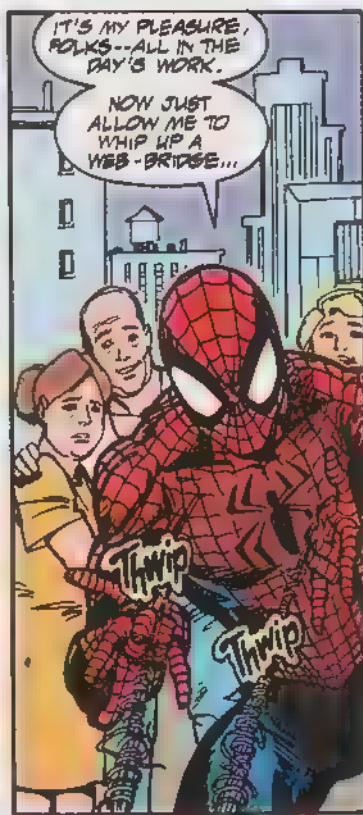
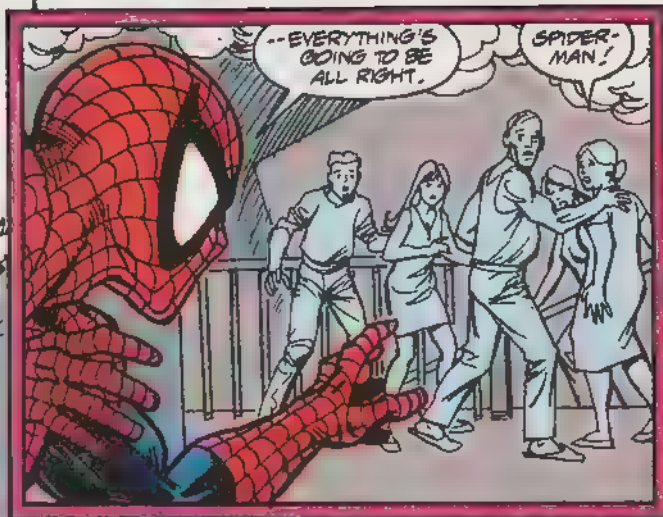
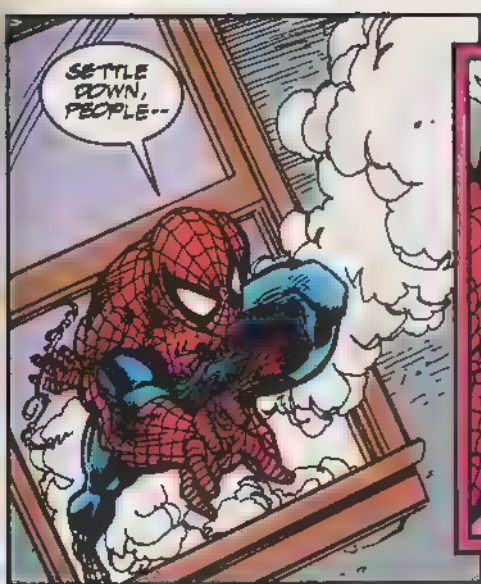
I'VE TOLD YOU ALREADY I AM VERY BUSY!

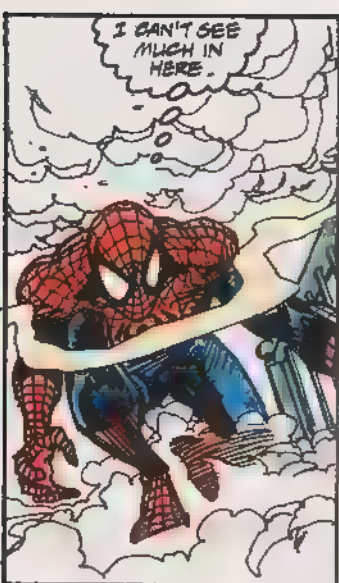
"NO TIME TO LOVE..."











I CAN'T SEE MUCH IN HERE.



DADDY! OVER HERE!

I HEAR YOU, HARRY! I'M ALMOST THERE!



"THEN CAME THAT NIGHT... THAT HORRIBLE NIGHT... WHEN TWO GREEN GOBLINS WERE BORN..."

DAD?
TONIGHT'S PARENT'S NIGHT. REMEMBER? DAD?



FORGET IT, HARRY! THERE'S NO WAY I CAN MAKE THAT NO WAY!

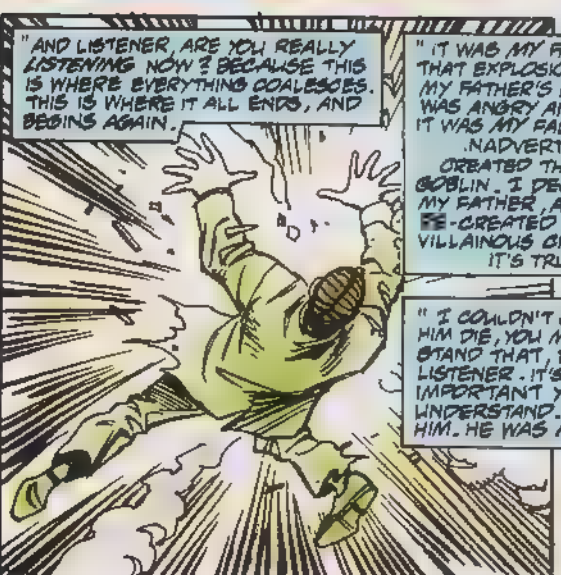
THIS IS MUCH MORE IMPORTANT! WHEN ARE YOU GONNA LEARN THAT?

DAD, I--



"LATER, WHEN DAD FINALLY TOOK A BREAK, I SNUCK INTO HIS LAB..."

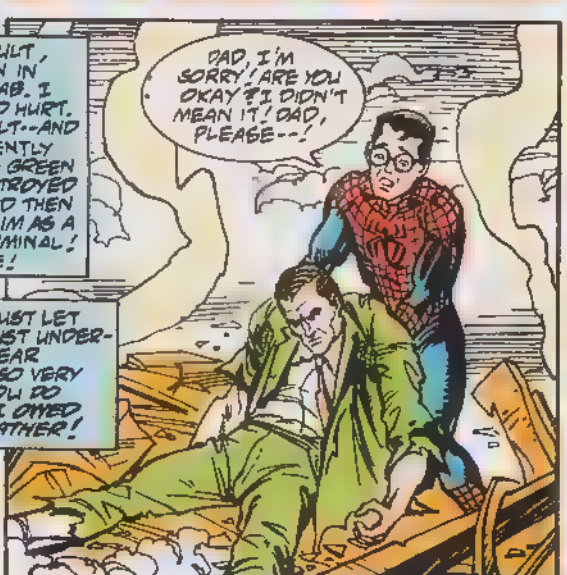
HE THINKS THIS EXPERIMENT IS MORE IMPORTANT THAN ME! I'LL SHOW HIM--I'LL SHOW HIM WHAT'S IMPORTANT!



"AND LISTENER, ARE YOU REALLY LISTENING NOW? BECAUSE THIS IS WHERE EVERYTHING COALESSES. THIS IS WHERE IT ALL ENDS, AND BEGINS AGAIN."

"IT WAS MY FAULT, THAT EXPLOSION IN MY FATHER'S LAB. I WAS ANGRY AND HURT. IT WAS MY FAULT--AND...
...NADVERTENTLY ORBATED THE GREEN GOBLIN. I DESTROYED MY FATHER, AND THEN RE-CREATED HIM AS A VILLAINOUS CRIMINAL! IT'S TRUE!"

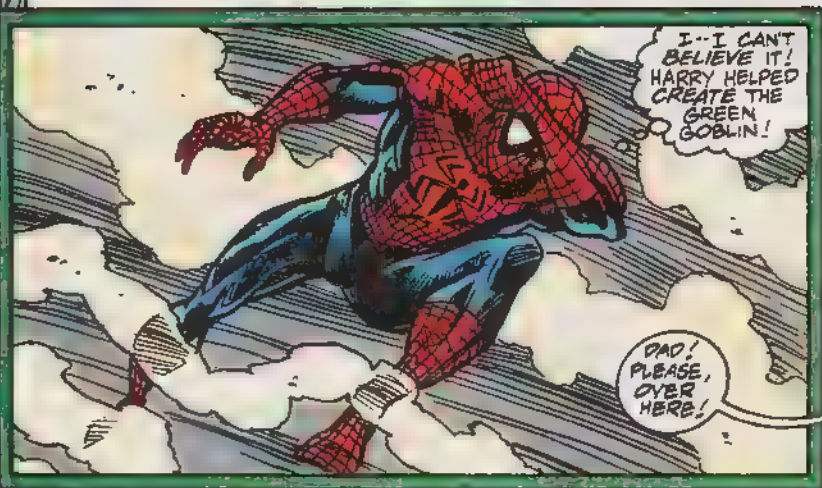
"I COULDN'T JUST LET HIM DIE, YOU MUST UNDERSTAND THAT, DEAR LISTENER. IT'S SO VERY IMPORTANT YOU DO UNDERSTAND. I OVED HIM. HE WAS FATHER!"



DAD, I'M SORRY! ARE YOU OKAY? I DIDN'T MEAN IT! DAD, PLEASE--!

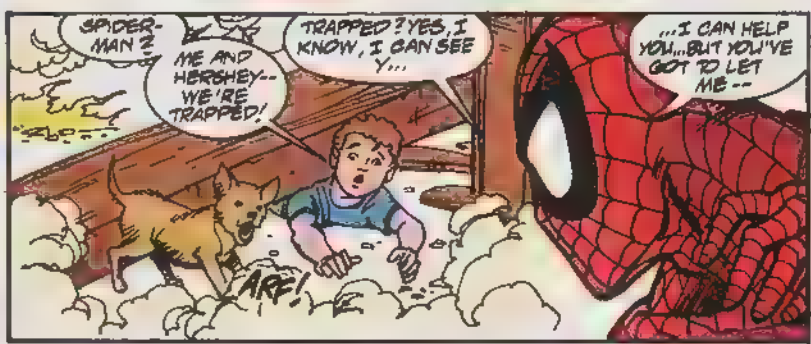


DAD!
HELP! HELP
ME!



I--I CAN'T
BELIEVE IT!
HARRY HELPED
CREATE THE
GREEN
GOBLIN!

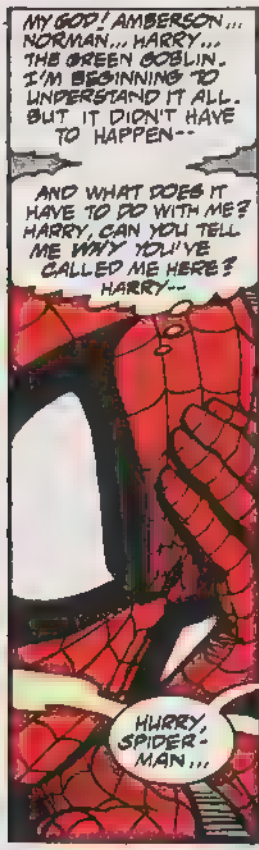
DAD!
PLEASE,
OVER
HERB!



SPIDER-
MAN?
ME AND
HERB--
WE'RE
TRAPPED!

TRAPPED? YES, I
KNOW, I CAN SEE
Y...

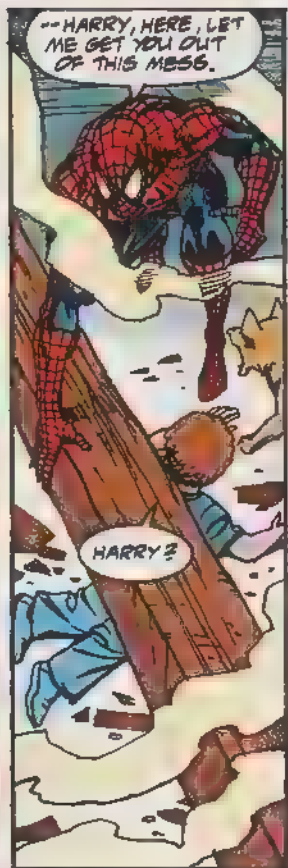
...I CAN HELP
YOU... BUT YOU'VE
GOT TO LET
ME--



MY GOD! AMBERSON...
NORMAN... HARRY...
THE GREEN GOBLIN...
I'M BEGINNING TO
UNDERSTAND IT ALL...
BUT IT DIDN'T HAVE
TO HAPPEN--

AND WHAT DOES IT
HAVE TO DO WITH ME?
HARRY, CAN YOU TELL
ME WHY YOU'VE
CALLED ME HERE?
HARRY--

HURRY,
SPIDER-
MAN...



--HARRY, HERE, LET
ME GET YOU OUT
OF THIS MESS.

HARRY?



I OWE IT TO
YOU, SOMEHOW,
I KNOW THAT
NOW... BUT WHAT
AM I SUPPOSED
TO ACCOMPLISH?
JUST WHAT
WOULD YOU HAVE
ME DO?



SPIDER-
MAN? ARE YOU
OKAY? YOU'RE
GONNA SAVE
US, AREN'T
YOU?

"SO YOU SEE . OUR
LEGACY HAS BEEN
PASSED DOWN."

"FROM
FATHER..."

"...TO SON."

"IT'S OUR
DESTINY."



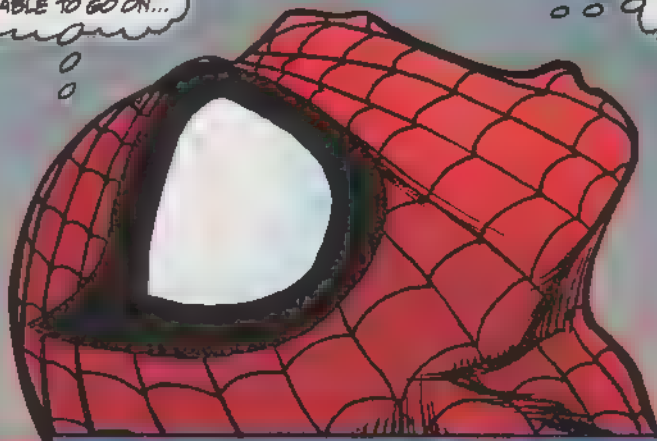
NOOOOO!
STOP IT, ALL OF
YOU! THIS HAS
GOT TO END. LET
ME ALONE!

I'M GOING TO
HAVE TO END THIS
OR I WON'T BE
ABLE TO GO ON...

BUT I
HAVE MY OWN
LIFE!

THE OSBORNS
ARE DEAD AND
GONE. HARRY WAS
MY FRIEND, BUT
HE'S DEAD NOW.

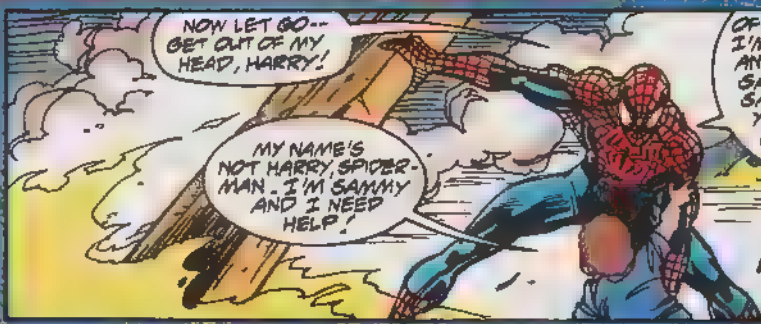
I'LL TRY AND
FORGIVE HIM--I
UNDERSTAND HIS
PAIN - HIS ACTIONS.
BUT I MUST
MOVE ON...

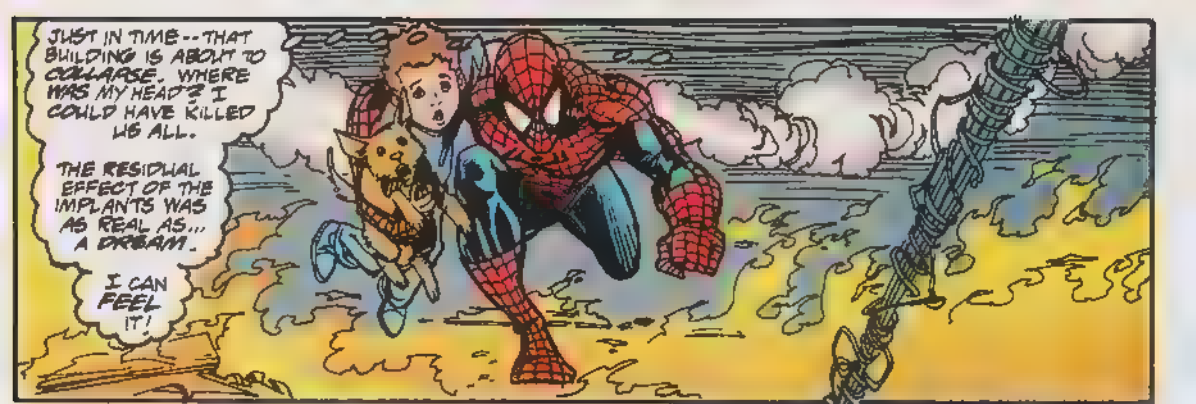


NOW LET GO--
GET OUT OF MY
HEAD, HARRY!

MY NAME'S
NOT HARRY, SPIDER-
MAN - I'M SAMMY
AND I NEED
HELP!

OF COURSE YOU ARE.
I'M GONNA GET YOU
AND HERSHEY HOME
SAFE RIGHT NOW,
SAMMY! GIVE ME
YOUR HAND AND
LET'S GO FOR
A RIDE!





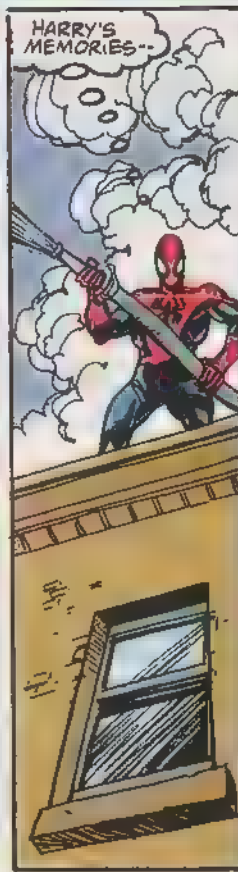
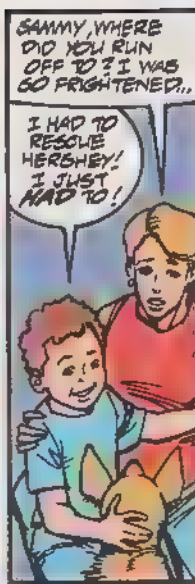
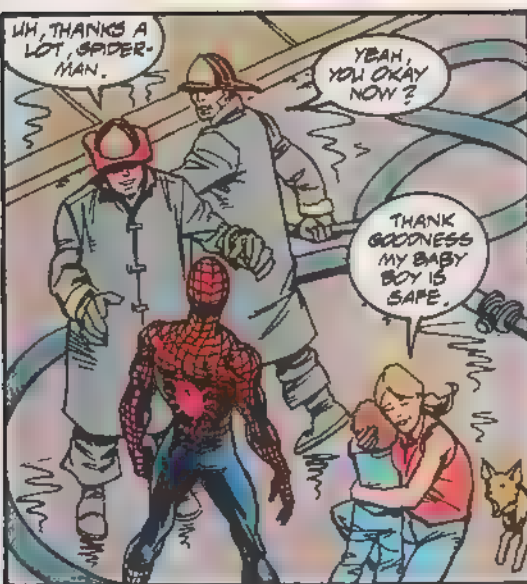
JUST IN TIME--THAT BUILDING IS ABOUT TO COLLAPSE. WHERE WAS MY HEAD? I COULD HAVE KILLED US ALL.

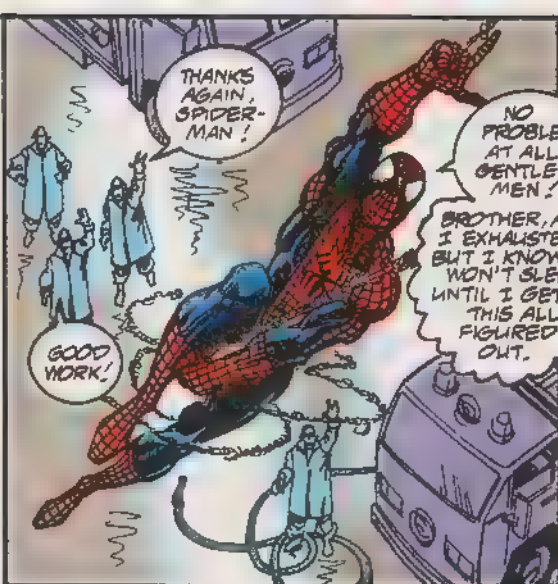
THE RESIDUAL EFFECT OF THE IMPLANTS WAS AS REAL AS... A DREAM...

I CAN FEEL IT!



I OWE IT TO MYSELF TO UNDERSTAND, SYMPATHIZE, AND BE RID OF THE OSBORN FAMILY CURSE ONCE AND FOR ALL.



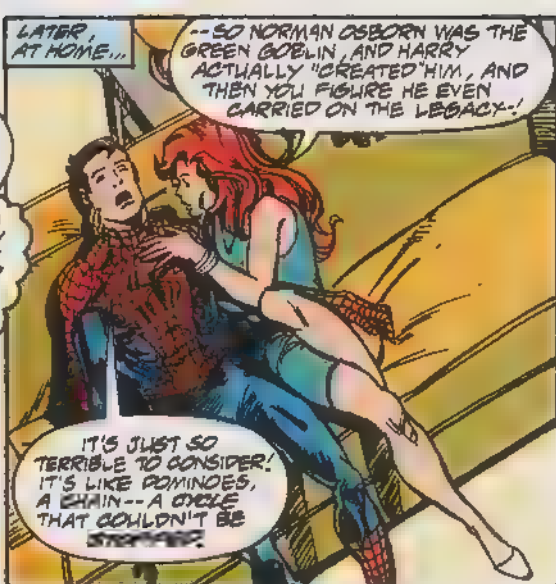


THANKS AGAIN, SPIDER-MAN!

NO PROBLEM AT ALL, GENTLEMEN!

BROTHER, AM I EXHAUSTED! BUT I KNOW I WON'T SLEEP UNTIL I GET THIS ALL FIGURED OUT.

GOOD WORK!



LATER, AT HOME...

--SO NORMAN OSBORN WAS THE GREEN GOBLIN, AND HARRY ACTUALLY 'CREATED' HIM, AND THEN YOU FIGURE HE EVEN CARRIED ON THE LEGACY--!

IT'S JUST SO TERRIBLE TO CONSIDER! IT'S LIKE DOMINOES, A CHAIN--A CHAIN THAT COULDN'T BE STOPPED.



WHY DON'T SOMEONE STEP IN ALONG THE WAY? AN AUNT, AN UNCLE?

LET IT REST NOW, PETER. YOUR WORK IS DONE. I'M PROUD OF YOU.

BUT THERE'S JUST ONE MORE THING--

CLICK

WASN'T ANYONE RESPONSIBLE ENOUGH?

--AND EQUALLY IMPORTANT, I THINK. LIZ--

PETER, I'M SORRY TO KEEP BOTHERING YOU, BUT--

--I DON'T UNDERSTAND, WHY YOU WON'T COME TO SEE US?

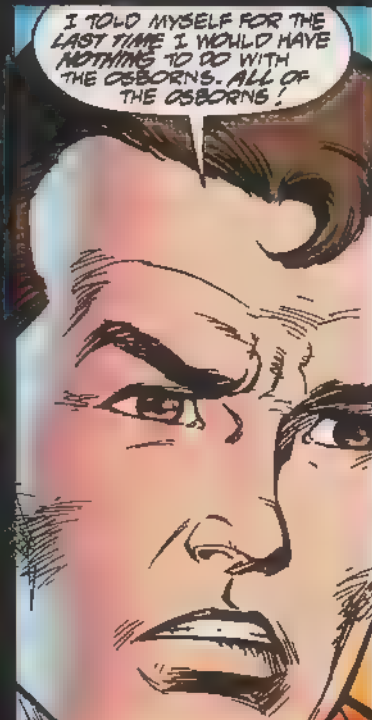
I'VE BEEN LONELY AND AFRAID--AND NORMIE HAS NO ONE EITHER. I GUESS YOU WERE FRIENDS WITH JUST MY HUSBAND--AND I'M ONLY THE WIDOW...

I DON'T WANT TO LISTEN TO THIS AGAIN! I FEEL SO-- SO USED.

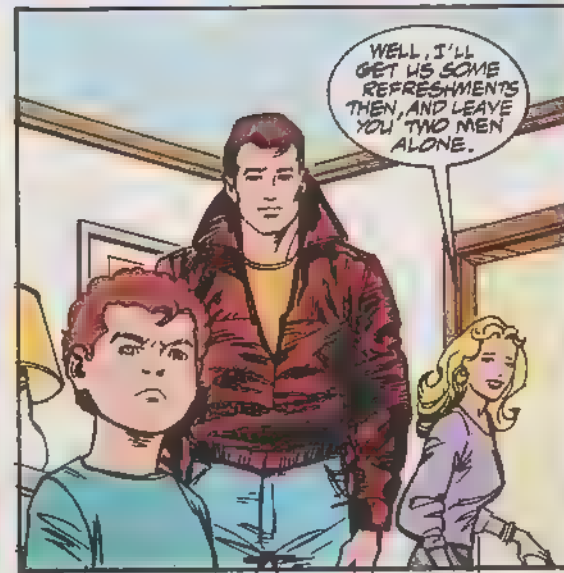
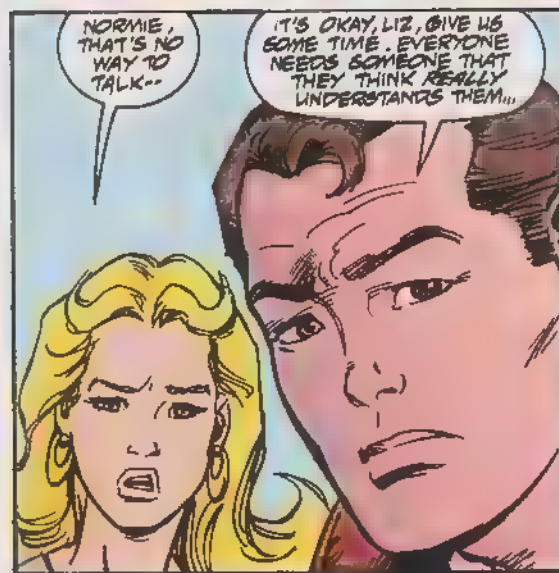
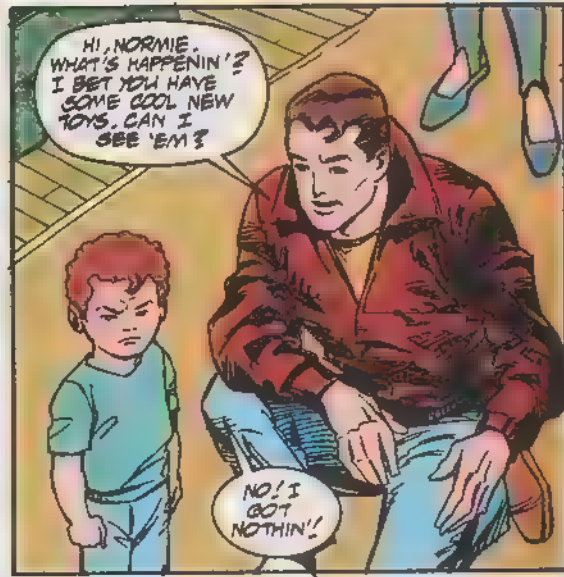
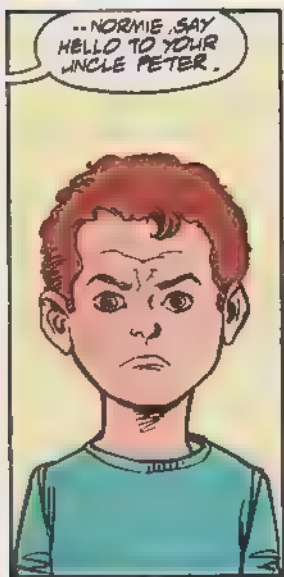
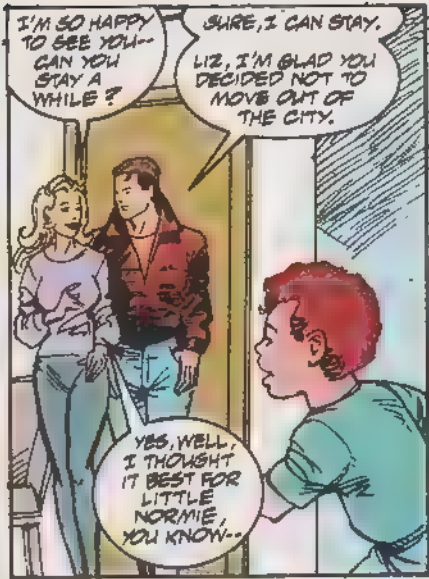
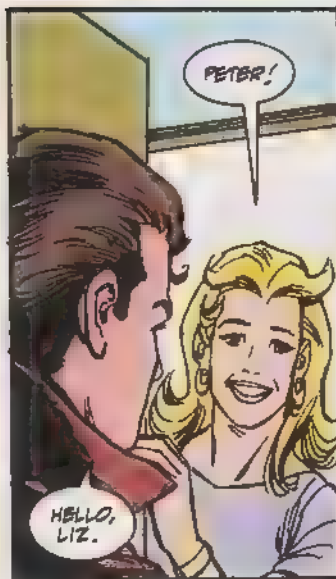
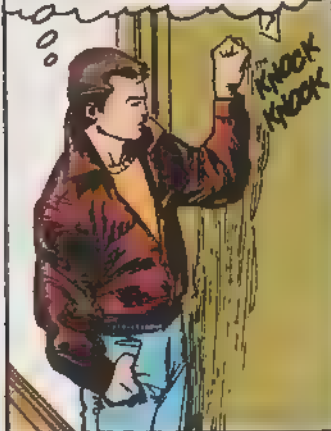
BUT I CAN SEE HOW IT ALL ADDS UP NOW, THE RHYMES AND REASONS--

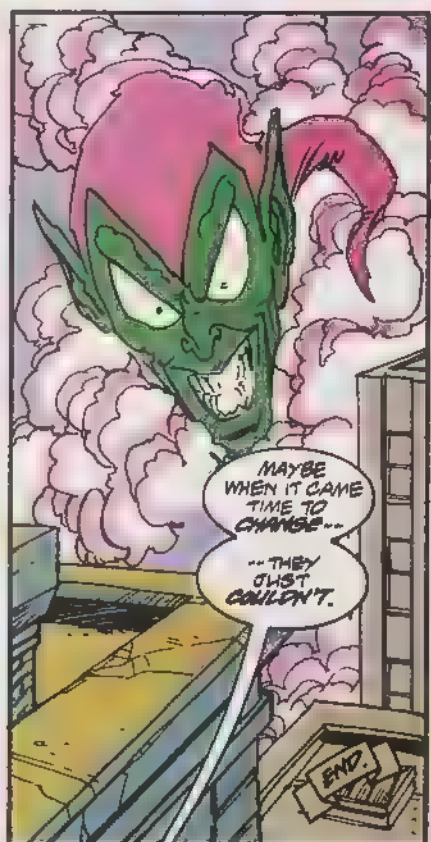
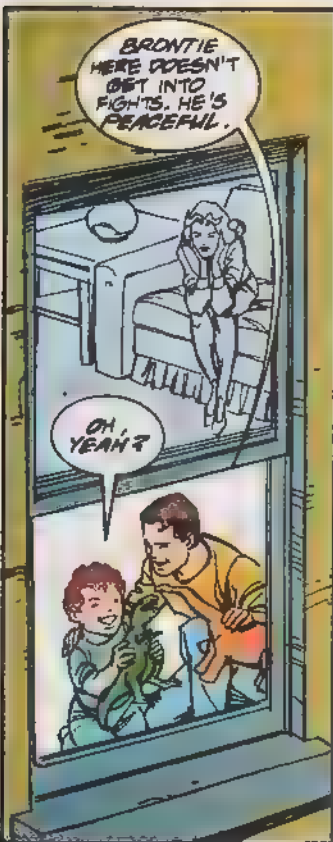
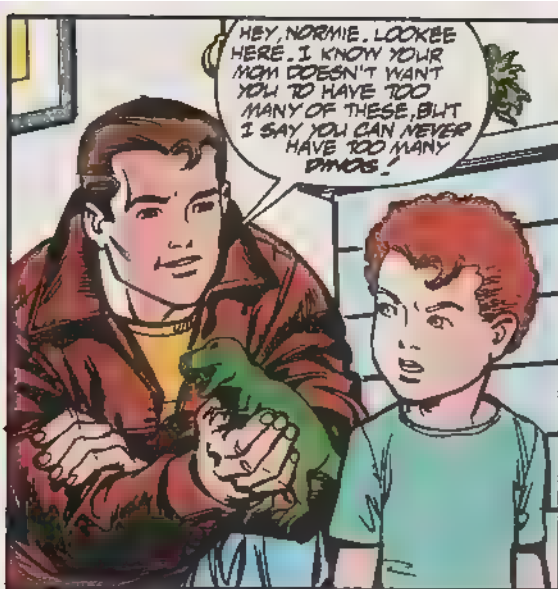
EVEN SO, I CAN'T JUST SUDDENLY BE OVERWHELMED BY SYMPATHY WHEN I'VE HAD SO MUCH RESENTMENT FOR SO LONG!

I TOLD MYSELF FOR THE LAST TIME I WOULD HAVE NOTHING TO DO WITH THE OSBORNES. ALL OF THE OSBORNES!



SOON-- SOMEONE'S GOT TO TAKE THIS IN HAND-- PUT AN END TO THE CYCLES OF DYSFUNCTION THAT CAN TEAR DOWN A FAMILY, RIP THROUGH GENERATIONS. MAYBE THAT SOMEONE IS ME.





JANGLEBEE SENDS THE DEATHS-MANAL-VE. THE FORK NEK IN

BACK TO BASICS

"THE IRONY OF THE SITUATION IS NOT LOST UPON ME - A FOREIGNER IN MY OWN ORGANIZATION, LURKING AMID THE SHADOWS, DISABLING SECURITY SYSTEMS. THAT'S WHAT I'VE BEEN REDUCED TO

"HOW PERFECTLY APPROPRIATE THAT I SHOULD LOSE CONTROL OF THE ONLY THING I STILL CARE FOR OF COURSE, THE FAULT IS NO ONE'S BUT MY OWN."

"I MADE THE MISTAKE OF CROSSING MY ONE-TIME EMPLOYER, AND THE FINALITY OF HIS RETRIBUTION WAS AS SUBTLE AS IT WAS TERRIBLE.

"LURKING IN THE SHADOWS WAS ALWAYS HIS WAY. HOW MUCH EASIER IT WAS TO LET OTHERS DO HIS DIRTY WORK.

"I MADE THE SAME MISTAKE I BECAME SOFT, ALOOF. LET HIM STEAL MY GUILD WHILE I SAT UNAWARE, CONTENT THAT NONE COULD DEFEAT ME.

"NOW, I MUST SLITHER THROUGH THE BOWELS OF MY ORGANIZATION IN ORDER TO SAVE IT -- EVEN IF IT MEANS DESTROYING IT.

"LIKE I SAID, IRON C."

IDELSON writer / LABAT penciler ANDERSON inker / SHARPE letterer / WALLENTA colorist
POWERS editor / FINGEROTH group editor / TOM DeFALCO editor in chief

"...AND RATHER DROLL."

"CLEARLY, MY DEPENDENCY ON MY SOLAR SATELLITE FOR STRENGTH AND ENDURANCE WAS AT THE HEART OF MY FAILURE *

"MY OPPONENT REALIZED, EVEN WHEN I DID NOT, THAT DESTROYING THE SATELLITE WOULD REVEAL THE WEAKNESS I HAD ALLOWED TO GROW WITHIN ME

"SO HE DESTROYED IT

* SEE SPECTACULAR #209-210 FOR THE FULL SCOOP.
-- CONVOY MARK

"STRIPPED OF THE POWER I HAD GROWN DEPENDENT ON, SUDDENLY HUNTED BY MY OWN ORGANIZATION.

"I WAS FORCED TO TURN TO SPIDER-MAN, OF ALL PEOPLE, FOR PROTECTION AGAINST MY OPPONENT'S AGENTS...

"AGENTS WHO WERE TAUGHT BY ME.

"IN RETURN FOR SPIDER-MAN'S HELP, I TURNED MYSELF OVER TO THE LOCAL AUTHORITIES *

"IT WAS DURING MY SHORT STAY IN CUSTODY THAT I REALIZED HOW MY SKILLS AND REACTIONS HAD ATROPHIED WHILE I LIVED OFF THE POWER OF MY SATELLITE.

* SEE SPECT. SPIDEY #210-- MARK

"OF COURSE, THEY HAD NOTHING TO HOLD ME FOR, AND I WAS RELEASED IN A MATTER OF HOURS.

"MY ORGANIZATION WOULD NEVER HAVE BEEN SO BASELY AND THOROUGHLY PERVERTED.

"IN THE PAST, I WOULD HAVE NEVER REQUIRED ANYONE'S HELP IN DEFEATING A COLLECTION OF MOSTLY AMATEUR AGENTS.

"BUT ENOUGH RECRIMINATIONS.

"I AM HERE TO MAKE RESTITUTION FOR MY CRIMES, AND PREVENT MY ASSASSIN GUILD FROM BECOMING AN UNCONTROLLED FORCE FOR MINDLESS BLOODSHED.

"I AM NOW TWO FLOORS DIRECTLY ABOVE MY TARGET.

"I TOOK THE PRECAUTION OF REPROGRAMMING THE SECURITY ASSIGNMENTS IN THE COMPUTER.

"UNFORTUNATELY..."

"... IT APPEARS THAT SOME AGENTS HAVE THEIR OWN IDEAS ABOUT SECURITY."



WHA--Z!
IT'S HIM!

WHUUSH

BZZT

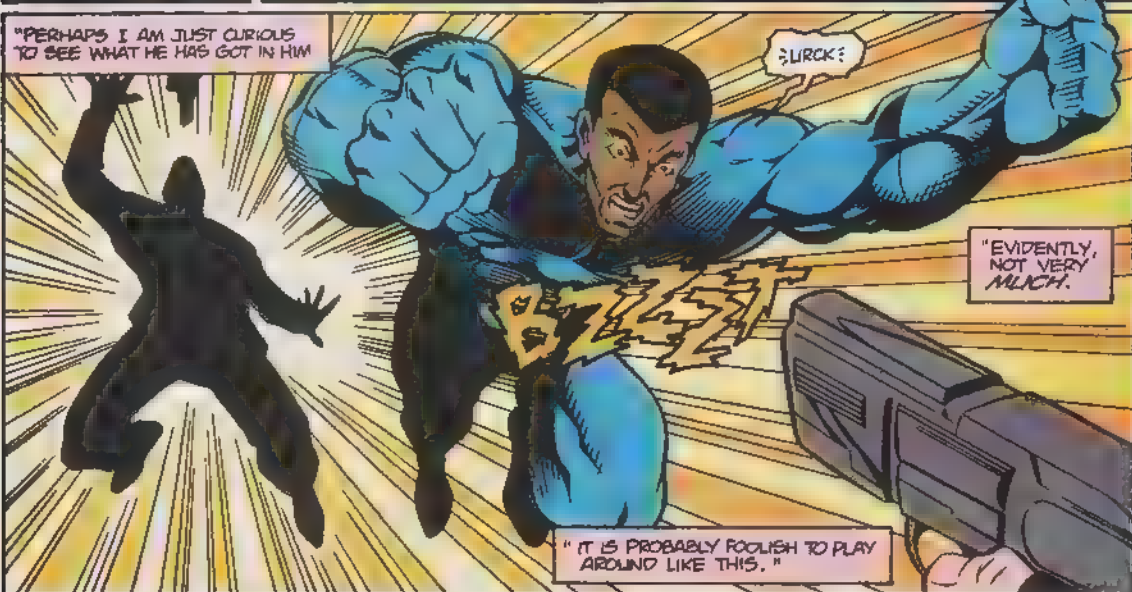
"IT SHOULD BE A SIMPLE ENOUGH MATTER TO TAKE THEM BOTH OUT BEFORE I HIT THE GROUND."

"INSTEAD, I ONLY TAKE OUT MY DOPPELGÄNGER'S GUN."

"THE ONLY VIABLE APPROACH APPEARS TO BE THE DIRECT ONE."

"HMM. LOOKS LIKE MY OPPONENT IS STILL USING DOUBLES OF ME. POINTLESS AND STUPID."

"PERHAPS I AM JUST CURIOUS TO SEE WHAT HE HAS GOT IN HIM"



BZZT?

"EVIDENTLY, NOT VERY MUCH."

"IT IS PROBABLY FOOLISH TO PLAY AROUND LIKE THIS."

"ALTHOUGH I WAS ABLE TO CARVE OUT A HOLE IN THE SECURITY NET, THE WEAPONS SCANNERS PLACED THROUGHOUT MY MANSION MAKES BRINGING IN THE HEAVY FIRE POWER IMPOSSIBLE.

"SCANNER READS MY TARGET AS AN **EMPTY ROOM**. NO PEOPLE, NO EQUIPMENT, NO POWER.

"EVEN THE BEST **NEURAL DISRUPTOR** CAN ONLY HOLD **FOUR SHOTS**, AND I HAVE JUST WASTED **TWO OF THEM**.

"WHICH MEANS THERE IS AN **ELECTRICAL DAMPENING FIELD** IN PLACE.

"WHICH MEANS IT IS A **TRAP**."



"STILL, I HAVE COME **THIS FAR**."

"...THIS PARTICULAR **EXPLOSIVE** SHOULD PUNCH A HOLE DOWN INTO THE NEXT ROOM—THROUGH A HALF-FOOT OF **OAK**, AND TWO FEET OF **STEEL**."



"IT IS A SHAME TO DAMAGE SUCH A **TASTEFULLY DECORATED ROOM**."



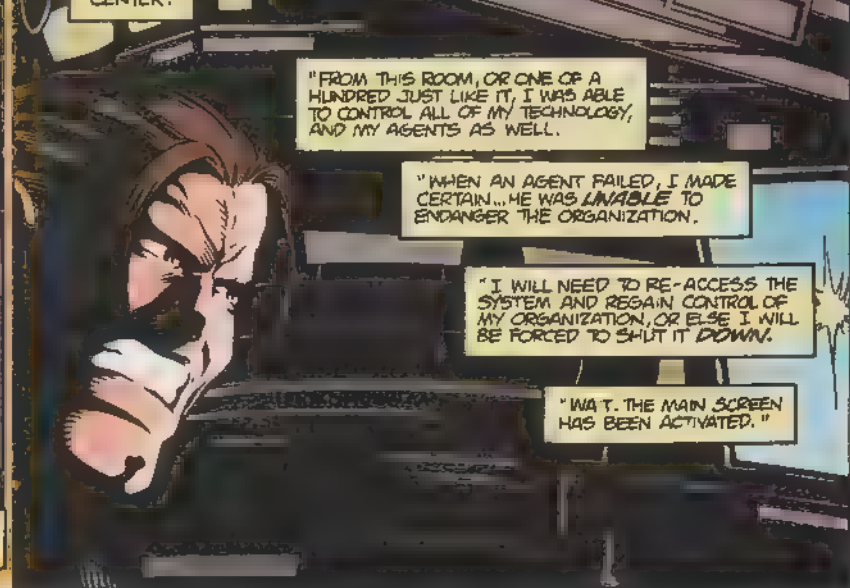
"OF COURSE, THESE DAYS THE PLACE COULD USE A LITTLE **RENOVATING**."

"EVEN ASSUMING THERE WILL BE NO **RESISTANCE** FOR ME..."



"THIS IS GOING TO BE THE **DIFFICULT PART**."

"MY MAIN **COMPUTER CENTER**."



"FROM THIS ROOM, OR ONE OF A HUNDRED JUST LIKE IT, I WAS ABLE TO CONTROL ALL OF MY **TECHNOLOGY**, AND MY AGENTS AS WELL."

"WHEN AN AGENT FAILED, I MADE CERTAIN...HE WAS **UNABLE** TO ENDANGER THE ORGANIZATION."

"I WILL NEED TO RE-ACCESS THE SYSTEM AND REGAIN CONTROL OF MY ORGANIZATION, OR ELSE I WILL BE FORCED TO SHUT IT **DOWN**."

"WAT. THE MAIN SCREEN HAS BEEN **ACTIVATED**."

GREETINGS,
MY OLD Foe. FROM THE
LOOK ON YOUR FACE, I'D
SAY YOU'RE LESS THAN
SURPRISED TO SEE ME.

AH, BUT THEN HOW COULD YOU
FORGET **JUSTIN HAMMER** THE MAN
YOU SO **ARROGANTLY** STOLE SOLAR-
CONVERSION TECHNOLOGY FROM WHILE
PRETENDING TO CARRY OUT YOUR
ASSIGNMENT FOR ME.

THE WAY I REMEMBER IT, YOU
RENEGED ON YOUR PAYMENT AFTER
I FAILED TO KILL ANTHONY STARK.
I SIMPLY **BILLED** YOU IN MY
OWN WAY.

AS YOU KNOW
BY NOW, I'VE MADE UP
FOR YOUR . ILL-ADVISED
THEFT BY **REMOVING**
YOUR 1400 CLUB
FROM YOU--!

"NOW WHAT DO I DO? BEST TO
KEEP HIM TALKING UNTIL I CAN
DEVEISE A METHOD TO SEVER THE
COMMUNICATION AND GET TO WORK."

YOU REFUSED TO PAY THE AMOUNT
WE AGREED UPON **REGARDLESS**
OF THE OUTCOME. I SIMPLY STOLE
YOUR SOLAR-CONVERSION TECH-
NOLOGY AS AN EQUITABLE
PAYMENT.

I **COULD** HAVE PATENTED
THE DEVICE AND BOUGHT YOU
OUT, BUT I DIDN'T.

AH, FOREIGNER,
YOU ARE **HARDLY** IN
A POSITION TO
NEGOTIATE.

I HAVE DESTROYED YOUR
PRECIOUS SATELLITE, I HAVE
TAKEN CONTROL OF YOUR COMPUTER
NETWORK, AND I **HAVEN'T**
FORGOTTEN THE INTEREST, WHICH
IS WHY I NOW CONTROL YOUR
ENTIRE ORGANIZATION.

IN FACT, YOU ARE
TRESPASSING ON MY
PROPERTY. I WILL ONLY
ASK YOU TO LEAVE
ONCE--

IF YOU PAY ME
NOW, I WILL FORGET
THE **INTEREST** AND
DELETE ALL PERTINENT
INFORMATION FROM MY
DATABASE. YOU **KNOW**
I ALWAYS KEEP
MY WORD.

BLP

--YOU NOW HAVE **TWO**
MINUTES TO VACATE THE
PREMISES BEFORE I RAZE
THIS MANSION TO THE GROUND.
I WISH YOU THE VERY BEST
OF **LUCK** IN GETTING
OUT.

"I SHOULD HAVE REALIZED
HE WOULD NOT MAKE IT EASY

"ANOTHER INTERDEPENDENT
TEAM OF AGENTS. * DOESN'T
HAMMER HAVE ANY IMAG-
INATION?"

LOOKS LIKE THIS GROUP IS
BASED ON AMPLIFIED HEARING,
VISION, AND STRENGTH.

* SEE SPEC.
209-210
AGAIN. --
MARK

"I REMEMBER SIGNING OFF ON THIS
PROJECT WHEN IT WAS IN THE DEVEL-
OPMENT STAGE. IT APPEARS HAMMER
DECIDED TO IMPLEMENT IT.

"HIS MISTAKE. THE AMPLIFIED
VISION COULD BE THE BIGGEST
PROBLEM. NEED TO SEPARATE
HIM FROM THE OTHERS.

"HAMMER RECOVERED
QUICKER THAN I
EXPECTED.

"PRESS THE
ADVANTAGE..."

"ANOTHER ONE
CLOSING IN.

"AND SEE IF THIS GROUP
IS ANY BETTER THAN THEIR
PREDECESSORS.

"IT WOULD APPEAR
THAT THEY ARE."

"I NOW KNOW ALL I
NEED TO MIGHT AS WELL
GET DOWN TO
BUSINESS."

"TWO LEFT AND ONLY ONE
CHARGE THAT MAKES THE ODDS
ABOUT EVEN."

BZZT

"SHURIKEN.
AN OLDIE BUT
A GOODIE."

WHISS

"GOOD LORD! IS THAT MIA??
IT IS! I TOOK HER IN, TRAINED
HER MYSELF. IF SHE'S CAPABLE
OF BETRAYING ME..."

".. BLAST I DID NOT REALIZE IT
WAS THIS BAD. MY FAILIRE
IS TRULY COMPLETE, NOW

WHERE D
HE GO--?

" THE STRONG
ONE IS
CLOSEST. "

ABOVE
YOU, FOOL!

"IN A MOMENT
IT WILL BE JUST
HER AND ME.

"I WAS TRAINING HER TO BE
MY SECOND-IN-COMMAND.

"I NEVER REALIZED
SHE COULD BE
CORRUPTED SO
EASILY.

"NO SENSE TALKING
LOYALTY TO HER HAMMER
HAS GOTTEN TO HER AS
MUCH AS THIS ONE
SPEAKING OF WHICH...

"... HIS NECK IS A
BIT THICKER
THAN I THOUGHT

SHNNNN

"SHE
CERTAINLY
HAS NOT
LOST HER
EDGE.

"JUST
HER
HONOR.

"THAT WAS THE **LAST**
SHOT SHE WILL GET
AT ME.

"KNEES ARE
THE WEAKEST
POINT

IT'S OVER, YOU OLD
FOOL! DIE LIKE A MAN
INSTEAD OF A DOG.

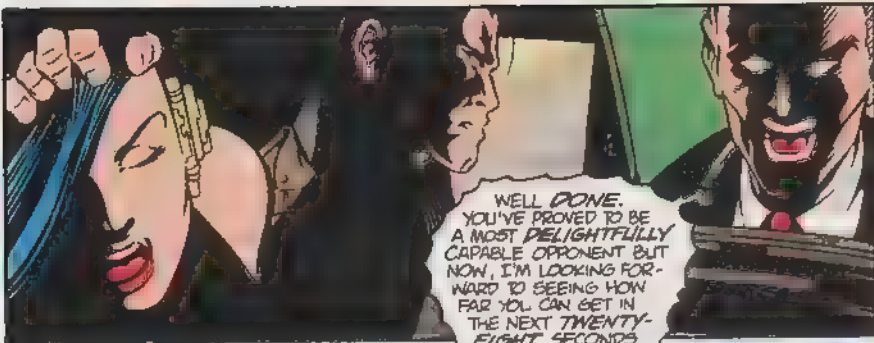
"OH, IT IS OVER
ALL RIGHT.

"YOU MOST OF ALL
HAVE SHOWN ME THAT.

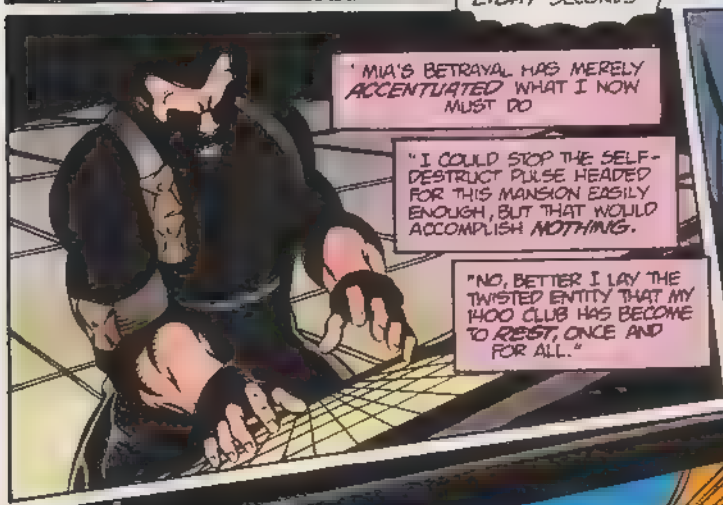
"NEVER
TRUST
ANYONE...

"I AM REMINDED
OF THE **FIRST**
RULE ONCE AGAIN.

...EVER."



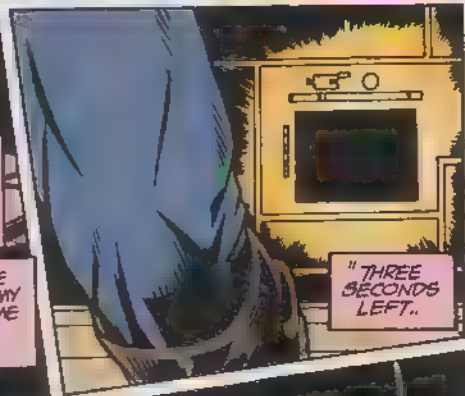
WELL DONE
YOU'VE PROVED TO BE
A MOST DELIGHTFULLY
CAPABLE OPPONENT BUT
NOW, I'M LOOKING FOR-
WARD TO SEEING HOW
FAR YOU CAN GET IN
THE NEXT TWENTY-
EIGHT SECONDS



"MIA'S BETRAYAL HAS MERELY
ACCENTUATED WHAT I NOW
MUST DO

"I COULD STOP THE SELF-
DESTRUCT PULSE HEADED
FOR THIS MANSION EASILY
ENOUGH, BUT THAT WOULD
ACCOMPLISH NOTHING.

"NO, BETTER I LAY THE
TWISTED ENTITY THAT MY
1400 CLUB HAS BECOME
TO REST, ONCE AND
FOR ALL."



"THREE
SECONDS
LEFT..





KRA BOOOOONK

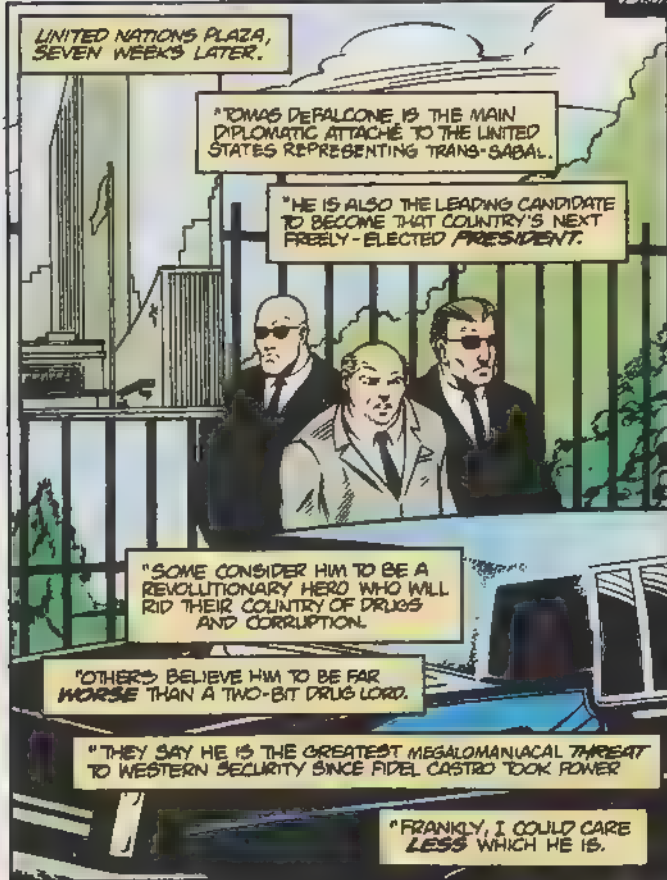
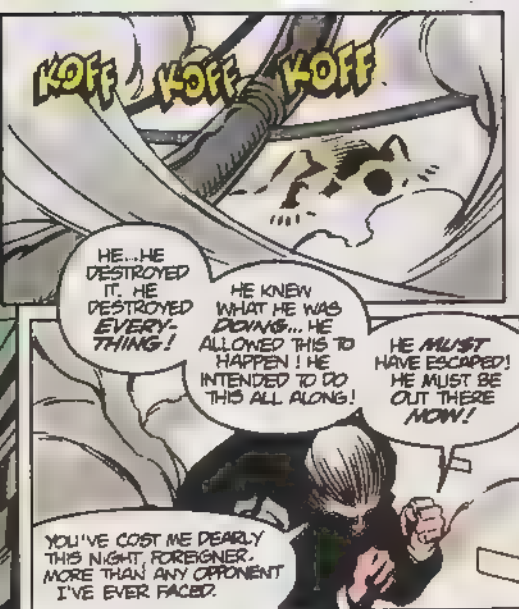
IT IS AT THAT PRECISE
MOMENT THAT JUSTIN
HAMMER REALIZES THE
FOREIGNER ALLOWED
THE PULSE TO REACH
THE MANSION.

FROM THERE, IT CONTINUES ON
THROUGHOUT HIS WORLDWIDE
COMPUTER NETWORK, DESTROYING
EVERY LAST PIECE OF EQUIPMENT
LINKED TO ITS SYSTEM...

...WHICH IS QUITE LITERALLY
EVERY PIECE OF THE FOREIGNER'S
TECHNOLOGY.

AND WHATEVER THOUGHTS OF VICTORY
JUSTIN HAMMER MIGHT HAVE HAD
QUICKLY VANISH AS THE DESTRUCTIVE
PULSE WHICH HE UNLEASHED.

...RETURNS TO ITS
POINT OF ORIGIN.



"NOTHING MORE,
NOTHING LESS

KRAK



KRAK

"I DEDICATED MY ENTIRE *LIFE* TO
BECOMING THE ULTIMATE ASSASSIN.
I HAVE DONE SO BY *LEARNING*
FROM MY MISTAKES.

"NO MORE
CRUTCHES
NO MORE
DEPENDENCIES.



"I NEED RELY ONLY
ON MY TRAINING,
MY SKILL...



"... AND MOST OF
ALL, MYSELF.

"MY NEW ORGANIZATION WILL NOT BE A
BLOATED, VULNERABLE ENTITY.

"I WILL TAKE A
PERSONAL HAND
IN ALL ASSIGNMENTS.
I WILL WATCH EVERY
MOVE OF MY ENEMIES
AND ALLIES ALIKE.

"AND I WILL
NEVER SUFFER
DEFEAT AGAIN.

"THIS I
DO SWEAR..."



LA FIN

CYPRESS HILLS CEMETERY. I
HADN'T BEEN THERE SINCE
THEY WERE BURIED.

I WAS STANDING THERE LETTING
THE SUN CATCH ME MOURNING

I DIDN'T KNOW WHAT I WAS STILL DOING IN
NEW YORK. I HAD BUSINESS TO ATTEND TO
IN LOS ANGELES—

BUSINESS AS THE SHROUD!

SHADOWS
THAT
LEAD
HOME

PROF. FELDER
WRITER

MARY MESSINA
WRITER

OTON BABCOCK
LETTERER

DAVID
CUNNINGHAM
PANELER

PAULA FOYE
COLORIST

MARCO BARBER
EDITOR

TOMMY D. FRILLO
EDITOR IN CHIEF

DANNY
"FINGERS-OFF"
GROUP
EDITOR

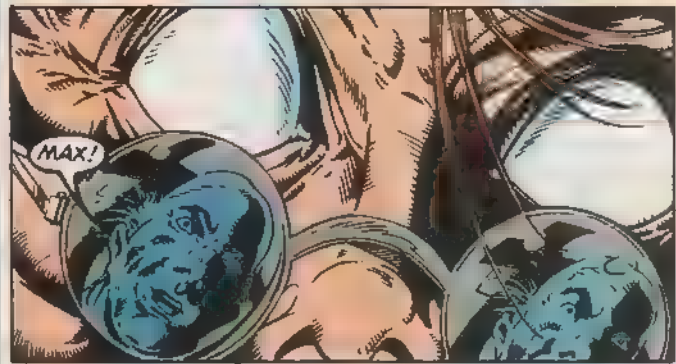
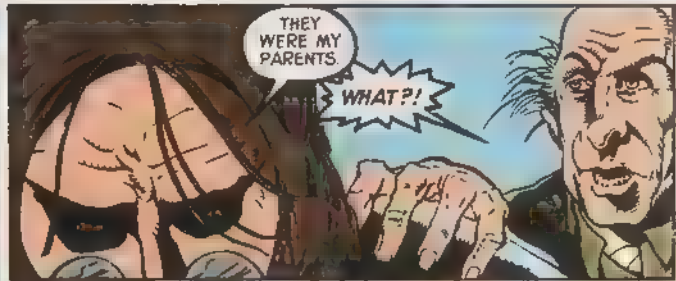
THE PAST HAD
FOUND ME
BLINDED— ONLY TO
BE GIVEN SECOND
SIGHT BY THE LEG-
END-SHROUDED
MONKS OF KALI. I D
LOST MYSELF. I
THOUGHT, IN A MIS-
SION OF FIGHTING
EVIL. BUT I STILL
FOUND MYSELF
THERE

—WAITING FOR MY PARENTS TO RETURN ON THE ANNIVERSARY OF
THEIR DEATH, AND IT SEEMED SO RECENT THAT THEY WERE THERE
BEFORE ME—POPPA CASTING HIS SHADOW OVER ME.

THAT PLAQUE HADN'T BEEN THERE WHEN I LEFT
GUESS I SHOULD HAVE EXPECTED IT FROM THE REPORTS
I SENT BACK. STILL, SEEING YOUR OWN GRAVE.

...ing Father And Husband
Seeker of Knowledge
"Follow the Star of the East..."
JULIA ROSE COLERIDGE
Devoted Wife and Mother

MAXIMILIAN QUINCY COLERIDGE
Dedicated Son and Scholar
And in Time, Coleridge-Rimulding Expedition
Alas! these bones to Nature's sweet embrace



IT HAD FELT GOOD TO RUN—AS I'VE
BEEN DOING THESE MANY YEARS.

EVEN IN THESE TEMPORARY LODGINGS, UNDER
THE ABANDONED ASYLUMS ON ROOSEVELT
ISLAND—I FELT SAFER HIDING HERE THAN
STANDING WHERE MY FAMILY LIES INTERRED

HERE, BURIED AMONG MY
GROTESQUE CURIOS—
SOUVENIRS OF MY CAREER
AS THE SHROUD—

—THE ALBINO APE HEAD, THE SKELETON OF
TORQUEMADA, THIS MAORI TATTOO-PICK,
WITH WHICH MY JOURNAL IS CARVED IN
CODE INTO THE SURFACE OF THIS OAKEN
TABLE. EVEN THIS JOURNAL.

—ONLY TO BE READ BY ME. ONE
THOUSAND AND ONE NIGHT-
MARE RELICS THAT HAVE MADE
MY IDENTITY AS THE SHROUD.

I HAVE SPENT SO LONG
BURIED IN THE STRANGE LIFE
I FOUND OUT EAST— LIFE AS
THE UNSEEN ONE—

—THAT I SOMETIMES WONDER IF THERE IS
A MAX STILL INSIDE ME AT ALL... OR JUST
THE BLACK HOLE THAT IS THE SHROUD.

WHAT DID OUR OLD FAMILY LAWYER, JUSTIN, SEE WHEN HE
LOOKED AT ME BACK IN THE GRAVEYARD? MAX-- A WALKING
CORPSE YEARS OLDER, STARING BACK AT HIM FROM SCARRED
SOCKETS? OR WAS IT THE DARK, SOULLESS GAZE OF THE
SHROUD THAT LEFT HIM GAPING IN HORROR?



MOUSE, I'M AS
JITTERY AS YOU
ARE STAYING IN
NEW YORK. BUT
YOU DON'T WANT
TO GO IN THERE.
THE BOSS'S
CREEPY WHEN
HE'S NOT IN
HIS SHROUD
JAMMIES!

KIA

CAT, SOMETHING IS WRONG.
THE BOSS IS ACTING STRANGE--
I MEAN STRANGER THAN USUAL!

AND I'M
GOING TO FIND
OUT WHY!

LOOK, SHROUD,
I'LL FOLLOW YOU
ANYWHERE. BUT
YOU GOTTA-- UH
UH.. BOSS?

HOW COULD
I EXPLAIN?

LEAVE!

NIGHT HAS
FALLEN.

UH.. UH

HOW TO EXPLAIN
WHAT IT WAS LIKE
AS THE SHADOWS
OF THE ROOM
SPILLED UP TO
CLOTHE ME BURY
ME-EMBRACE ME-
TO MAKE ME THE
SHROUD!

HOW DID
YOU KNOW IT WAS
NIGHT?

WHAT ANSWER COULD I GIVE HER
EXCEPT SILENCE? SHE COULDN'T-- NO
ONE COULD UNDERSTAND THE DARK
PATHS MY THOUGHTS FOLLOWED

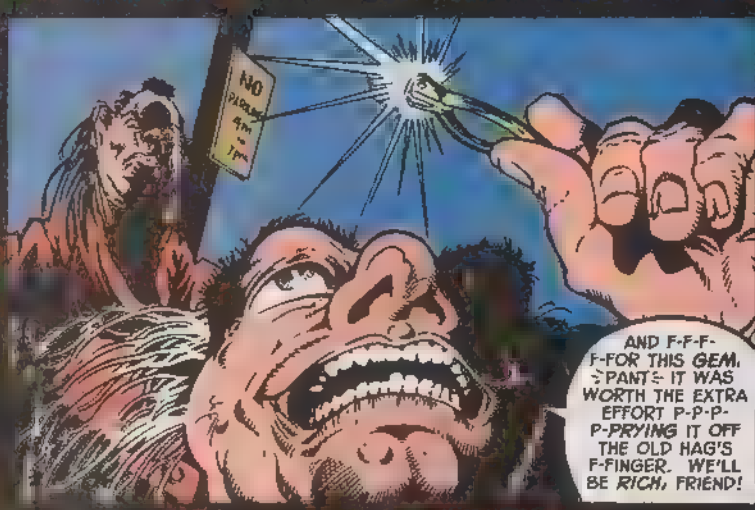
FOR WHERE THE SHROUD WALKS, ONLY EVIL KNOWS THE PATH

—AND IT WAS EVIL, THAT
WAS AFOOT THAT NIGHT!

ROSS, I ALMOST
THINK YOU ENJOYED IT
WHEN THAT OLD LADY
KICKED YOU

YEAH, W-W-
W-WELL, I GAVE
HER A FEW K-KICKS
B-B-BACK, STEIN
SHE WON'T BE
WALKING AGAIN,
FRIEND!

HEH, HEH, HEH
PANT! PANT! HEH PANT!
HEH, HEH



AND F-F-F-
F-FOR THIS GEM,
PANT! IT WAS
WORTH THE EXTRA
EFFORT P-P-P-
P-PRYING IT OFF
THE OLD HAG'S
F-FINGER. WE'LL
BE RICH, FRIEND!

YES,
ROSS

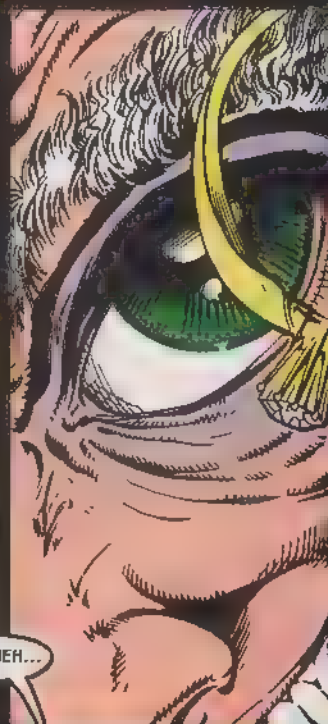
S-S-SELL
THIS LITTLE S S-S-
STAR AND YOU AND
M-ME, FRIEND, CAN
GO UP THE HUDSON--
S-S-S-SLEEP THE W-
WINTER TH-TH-THROUGH
LIKE TWO M-M-M--
RICH MEN!

SOUNDS
LOVELY.

HEH, HEH...

YOU AND ME, FRIEND--
J-JUST L-LIKE M-M-M M
MILLIONAIRES!

YOU AND ME,
FRIEND
HAHAHAHA...



SHINK

Phshwhirr!!!

GENTLEMEN-- YOU
HAVE JUST ENTERED
A NIGHTMARE...

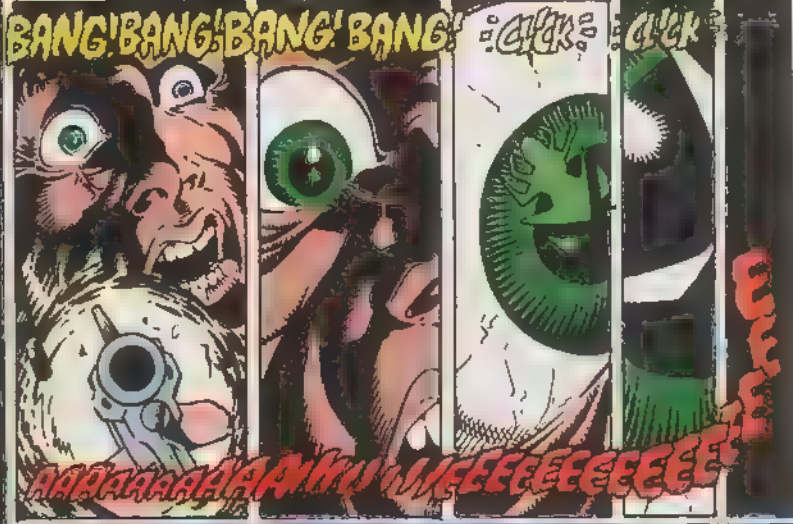
...MY NIGHTMARE

PLEASE
CONSIDER
YOUR NEXT
MOVE VERY
CAREFULLY--
FOR YOUR
OWN SAFETY



IF THE BLADE
DOESN'T STOP YOU,
THEN THE BULLETS
WILL, HALLOWEEN
BOY!

TRICK OR TREAT!



THAT'S IT,
FAT ONE...
DANCE WITH
ME.

YA
F-F-FREAK.
I'M G-GOING
TO SLICE YOUR
VILLAGE A--

CLOSER CLOSER... WHEN
THE DANCE IS OVER, WHICH
OF YOU WILL BE COVERED IN
THE SHROUD OF DEATH?

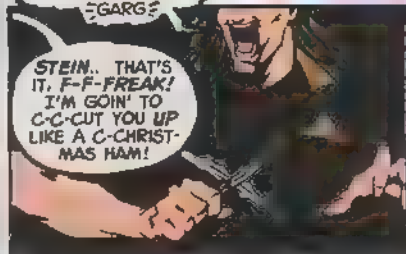


HAHA-- A
NOBLE CUT!

ROSS...
YOU CUT MEEEE
-GARG?

STEIN.. THAT'S
IT, F-F-FREAK!
I'M GOIN' TO
C-C-CUT YOU UP
LIKE A C-CHRIST-
MAS HAM!

AHHN, THE
DANCE ENDS
FOR YOUR
FRIEND, FAT
ONE.



--BUT WE SHALL DANCE
FARTHER AND FARTHER UP,
WALTZING UP ON A TRAIL OF
BLOOD AND DARKNESS-- FOR
A THREE HUNDRED POUND
WASTE OF HUMAN FLESH YOU'RE
SO...LIGHT ON YOUR FEET!

ARRRGH! P-P-P-PUT ME DOWN!
YOU G-G-G-GOONY FREAK!

YOU DISGUST ME, LITTLE
PIG-MAN, YOU AND YOUR
FRIEND, THE OLD WOMAN
YOU LEFT ON SULLIVAN
STREET THIS EVENING LIES
IN A HOSPITAL BED IF SHE
MAKES IT THROUGH THE NIGHT,
IT WILL BE A MIRACLE. I
SUGGEST YOU PRAY FOR A
MIRACLE, PIG-MAN.

P-P-P-P-P

I FEEL SSSO
ANGRY. I FEEL
LIKE I--WILL--
SNAP!

OOOOHHHHH
M-MY WRIST YOU
B-B-BROKE M-

THE SHROUD WILL LAUGH
AT YOU AND YOUR BROKEN
FRIEND DO YOU WANT TO
KNOW WHY I LAUGH, PIG-
MAN? DO YOU WANT TO
KNOW THE PUNCHLINE OF
THE SHROUD'S JOKE?

OH P-P-PLEASE!
N-N-N-P-P-PLEASE!
N-N-N-N-N-N-N-N-N-N

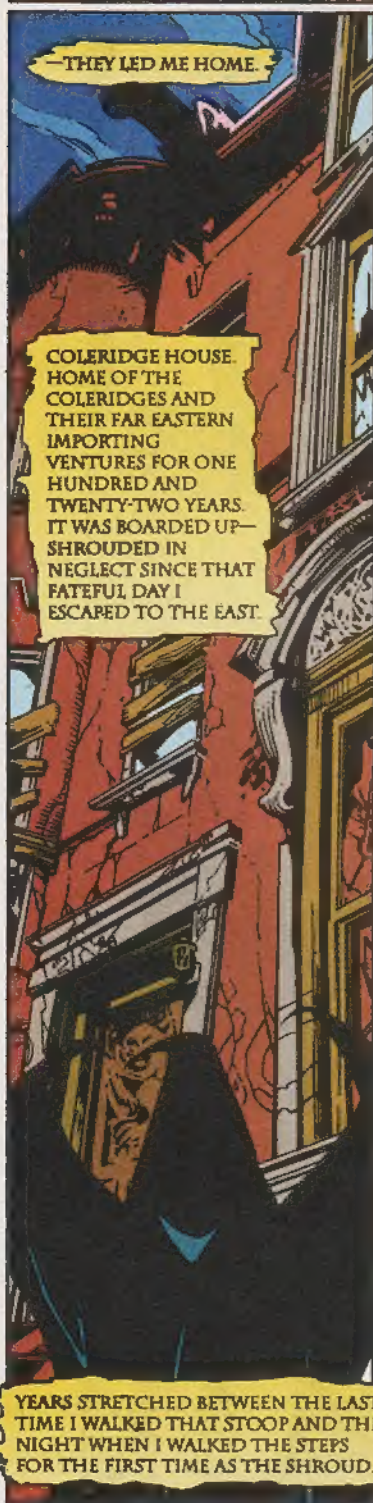
HEH HEH HEH HEH

HE LOST THAT TEDIOUS STUTTER JUST BEFORE HE
LOST CONSCIOUSNESS--IT'S THE LITTLE GOOD WE DO
IN THE DARKNESS THAT MAKES IT ALL WORTHWHILE.



BUT IN THE END I AM ALWAYS LEFT ALONE IN THE DARKNESS. I DROPPED THE TRASH AT THE LOCAL CONSTABULARY—MY JOB FINISHED. BUT STILL THERE WERE DARK ALLEYS THAT BECKONED, SHADOWS THAT LED ME DEEPER AND DEEPER INTO THE MAZE OF OLD GREENWICH VILLAGE.

FOR SO MANY YEARS I FOLLOWED THE SHADOWS OF THE DARK SIDE OF HUMANITY—RUNNING FROM ONE PLACE. BUT THAT NIGHT THE SHADOWS BETRAYED ME. THEY LED ME TO THAT ONE PLACE I NEVER WANTED TO RETURN TO—



—THEY LED ME HOME.

COLERIDGE HOUSE. HOME OF THE COLERIDGES AND THEIR FAR EASTERN IMPORTING VENTURES FOR ONE HUNDRED AND TWENTY-TWO YEARS. IT WAS BOARDED UP—SHROUDED IN NEGLECT SINCE THAT FATEFUL DAY I ESCAPED TO THE EAST.

YEARS STRETCHED BETWEEN THE LAST TIME I WALKED THAT STOOP AND THE NIGHT WHEN I WALKED THE STEPS FOR THE FIRST TIME AS THE SHROUD.



THE TANG DYNASTY LOCKING PIECE ON THE DOOR THAT GRANDFATHER SMUGGLED FROM BEIJING BEFORE IT FELL—IT STILL FIT THE CONTORTED JADE KEY THAT I HAD KEPT HIDDEN CLOSE TO MY DARK HEART ALL THESE STRANGE YEARS.



INSIDE, THE ACCUMULATED ARTIFACTS OF ONE HUNDRED AND EIGHTY-ONE YEARS—COLERIDGE EXPLORERS AND IMPORTERS, WHOSE SELF-APPOINTED MISSION WAS TO BRING THE WONDERS OF THE EAST TO THE IGNORANT WEST.

ALL THE BIZARRE CURIOS OF MY CAREER AS THE SHROUD LOOM OVER ME LIKE A GRAVESTONE IN A NIGHTMARE. BUT THESE ONCE FAMILIAR, GENTEEL HEIR-LOOMS—THEY STAND BEFORE ME—



—A REMINDER OF WHAT WAS ONCE TO BE A CONTINUING SHINING DREAM. A LIFE IN THE LIGHT.



EVEN NOW—POPPA, MOTHER, EVEN GRUMPY OLD JUSTIN. THEY STILL STAND THERE BEFORE ME. EVEN WITH ALL THE DARKNESS IN MY HEART THAT HAS SPILLED OVER TO ECLIPSE MY WORLD—

THE SHINING, WHITE GHOSTS OF THEM STILL STAND BEFORE ME. GHOSTS OF A GOOD LIFE THAT WAS DESTROYED. THEY REMAIN BEFORE ME—

—EVEN NOW!

COLERIDGE
EXPLORERS & IMPORTERS
EST. 1813

PRESENTING THE WONDERS OF
THE MYSTERIOUS ORIENT
STAR OF THE EAST

THE SHROUDS PATH! I WALK
WITH EVIL, POPPA. I RETURNED
HOME BLIND, BUT SEEING A
DARKER, TRUER LIGHT.

YOU PROMISED YOU WOULD
ALWAYS BE THERE FOR ME...

MAXIE,
GREAT
THINGS LIE
IN THE
EAST—
THINGS THAT
CAN
IMPROVE
LIFE IN THE
WEST.

THE STAIRCASE THAT
MR. WRIGHT BUILT FOR
GRANDFATHER. STAINED
WITH MOTHER'S BLOOD
AND YOURS AFTER YOU
WERE SHOT IN THAT
ALLEY AND RUSHED
HOME. THERE WOULD BE
THE LAST PLACE I WOULD
SEE YOU ALIVE.

ON THE QUIET NIGHTS, IN MY
PRIVATE DARKNESS—I STILL HEAR THE
DRIPPING OF THE COLERIDGE BLOOD
ON THE STEPS— THE SCREAMING.

AND OUTSIDE THE STUDY, WHERE
THE CARPET STILL LAYS CLAWED
FROM WHEN I HEARD THE NEWS...

LOOK, MASTER COLERIDGE--
I'M SORRY. THEY'RE DEAD.
BUT THINGS WILL BE OKAY. I
REMEMBER WHEN QUINCY SENIOR,
YOUR GRANDFATHER, DIED.
EVERYTHING WILL CONTINUE.
THIS TOO SHALL PASS--

QUINCY,
LEAN ON ME YOU
STUBBORN CAD!
YOU'VE JUST BEEN
SHOT!

JUSTIN, I'M
--UNGH--OKAY. IT'S
JULIA I'M WORRIED
ABOUT! JULIA?
JULIA!

KEEP HER
STEADY! MRS.
COLERIDGE'S
GOING INTO
SHOCK!

MOTHER?

YES,
POPPA.

I LISTENED TO YOU,
POPPA. WHEN ALL
ELSE WAS LOST.
WHEN EVEN YOU
ABANDONED ME--
MURDERED BEFORE
MY EYES--DYING,
YOU HAD SAID YOU
WOULD NEVER LEAVE
ME. I LISTENED AND
WENT EAST. BUT
WHAT PATH DID I
FIND?

NO! NO!
HE PROMISED!
POPPA PROMISED
THAT HE AND
MOTHER WOULDN'T
EVER LEAVE ME!
THEY...

THERE ARE SOME PROMISES
I WOULD HAVE GIVEN
MORE THAN MY EYES TO
HAVE SEEN KEPT.

AND THROUGH THE YEARS, ENTRANCES AND EXITS TOOK PLACE ON THAT STAIRCASE LANDING—MY EXIT—JUSTIN TRYING TO KEEP HIS PROMISE TO MY DYING POPPA TO TAKE CARE OF ME, RAISE ME RIGHT.

LOOK, YOUNG MAN! I WON'T HAVE YOU RUNNING OFF LIKE SOME HIPPIE TO TAIWAN! I PROMISED YOUR FATHER I WOULD RAISE YOU TO RUN THE BUSINESS-- TO FOLLOW HIS DREAM--

ALL SO I DIDN'T HAVE TO EVER GO BACK IN THAT ROOM--

—POPPA'S STUDY.

POPPA AND GRANDFATHER AND GREAT GRANDFATHER AND MORE COLERIDGES FURTHER BACK HAD OPERATED FROM THAT ROOM-- THAT CHAIR.

I AM FOLLOWING HIS DREAM! I'M FOLLOWING THE STAR OF THE EAST. THERE IS NOTHING HERE FOR ME. EVERYTHING HERE IS DEAD. I'M DEAD! I WILL NOT--

DON'T YOU RAISE YOUR VOICE TO ME, MASTER COLERIDGE! JUST BECAUSE YOU GROW A BEARD AND STOP WASHING YOUR HAIR YOU THINK YOU KNOW MORE THAN ME. WELL, JUSTIN MEAGHER PASSED THE BAR LONG BEFORE YOU--

QUIET. MY NAME'S MAX. YOU WILL NOT CALL ME "MASTER" ANYTHING. YOU ARE FIRED.

SO MUCH SILLINESS AND ANGER. HOW WAS I TO KNOW WHAT HORRORS AND STRANGENESS LAY IN THE DARK YEARS AHEAD?

THAT CHAIR, ONCE BEAUTIFUL AND REGAL, NOW OLD AND VANDALIZED. THE ONE I WAS SUPPOSED TO SIT IN ONE DAY.

MAXIE, MY SWEET, LITTLE BOY-- COME HUG YOUR POPPA!

POPPA... I DON'T WANT TO SIT IN THAT CHAIR-- I WANT YOU TO BE THERE.

STUDY, MASTER COLERIDGE. I WILL NOT HAVE YOU FLUNKING ANYMORE AT THE ACADEMY. THAT CHAIR WAITS FOR YOU. CHOOSE NOW-- BE AN ADULT OR TRAMPLE ON YOUR DEAD FATHER'S DREAMS. I WILL SEE YOU BE A COLERIDGE YET-- EVEN IF IT KILLS ME!

NO, JUSTIN. NO... IT'S POPPA'S CHAIR... ALWAYS.

...YOU'LL SIT HERE, AS YOUR GRANDFATHER AND HIS FATHER AND FATHER BEFORE HIM DID. AND YOU'LL DO US ALL ONE BETTER. YOU'LL BE THE BRIGHTEST LIGHT OF THEM ALL, SON. A SUN COMPARED TO THE STAR OF THE EAST!

POPPA, THERE IS NO LIGHT HERE. ONLY SHADOWS. I AM THE UNSEEN ONE. THE SUN IS ABHORRENT TO ME. I FLEE FROM THE STARS, FOR THEIR COLD LIGHT BLINDS ME!

BUT NOW I SEE THAT THERE ARE THE SHADOWS WE CAST AND THERE ARE THE SHADOWS WE FOLLOW. I MUST CHOOSE BETWEEN THEM.

POPPA, IS YOUR SON MAX SOMEWHERE READY TO WAKE IN THE NIGHT-- TO SEE DAY AGAIN?

WHERE WILL I SIT? IN DARKNESS OR LIGHT?

HAS MAX COLERIDGE GROWN UP? OR DID HE DIE SOMEWHERE ON THE ROAD TO KALI, AND ONLY THE MASTER OF DARKNESS REMAINS AS A FADING AFTER-IMAGE? I MUST DECIDE...



WITH THE PAINFUL BRIGHTNESS OF DAWN, I RETURNED TO THE HEADQUARTERS ON ROOSEVELT ISLAND— FOR I HAD MADE MY DECISION.



CAT! MOUSE! PACK UP EVERYTHING! WE ARE LEAVING WITH THE RISING OF THE MOON!

YES!



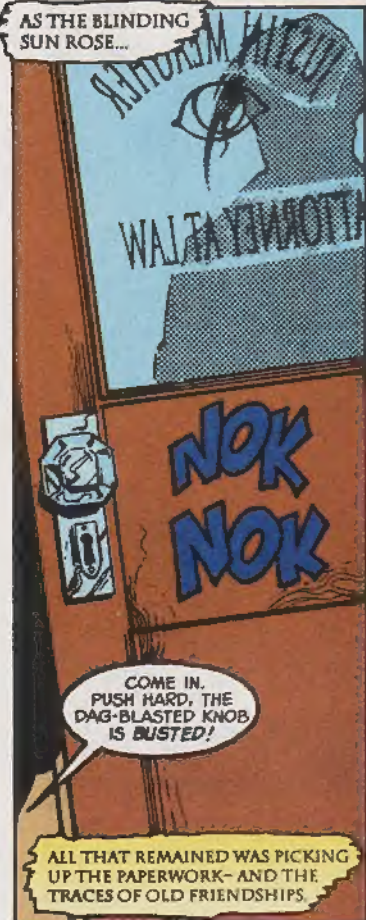
BOSS ALWAYS DOES RIGHT. EVEN WHEN HE CHOOSES WRONG, HE DOES RIGHT!

I KNOW, CAT. IT'LL BE GOOD TO FEEL THE LA SUN AGAIN--



--OR THE VILLAGE MOONLIGHT? WE ARE MOVING TO MANHATTAN, NOT LOS ANGELES.

HA HA HA HA HA



AS THE BLINDING SUN ROSE...

NOK NOK

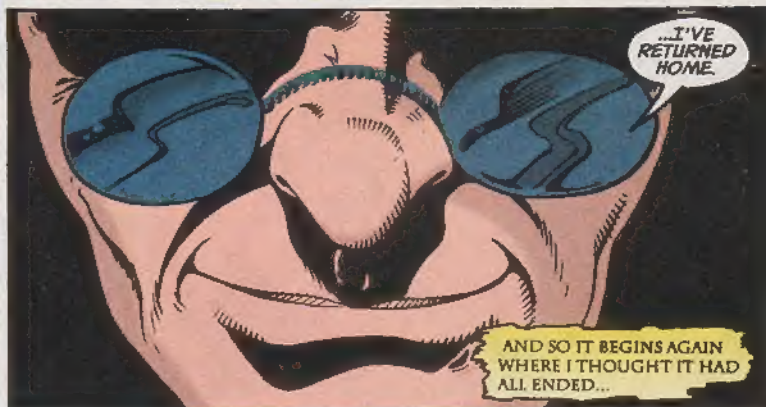
COME IN. PUSH HARD, THE DAG-BLASTED KNOB IS BUSTED!

ALL THAT REMAINED WAS PICKING UP THE PAPERWORK— AND THE TRACES OF OLD FRIENDSHIPS.



MAX! IT WAS YOU IN THE CEMETERY! WHERE THE DEVIL WERE YOU ALL THESE YEARS? I THOUGHT YOU WERE DEAD!

NEVER MIND, JUSTIN. I'VE BEEN THROUGH A LONG, DARK NIGHT. I WANT TO OFFICIALLY ENGAGE YOUR SERVICES AGAIN IN THE NAME OF THE COLERIDGE ESTATE. I...



...I'VE RETURNED HOME.

AND SO IT BEGINS AGAIN WHERE I THOUGHT IT HAD ALL ENDED...